VYASAKAVI FAKIRMOHAN

THE PRECURSOR OF A NEW ERA

Rajkishore Mishra

FAKIR MOHAN UNIVERSITY

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First Published
on *Makara Sankranti*
15 January, 2008

Published by
Fakir Mohan University
Vyasa Vihar, Balasore, 756019
Orissa, India
www.fmuniversity.org

Distributors
Registrar Fakir Mohan University
Balasore

VIDYAPURI
Balubazar, Cuttack 753002

Illustration credits
Front cover photo painting
by Nityananda

Cover design
by Bijoy Kumar Pradhan

DTP
by H. K. Saheo, Bhubaneswar

Layout at
Vidyashree DTP Centre
Alamchand bazar, Cuttack 753002

Printed at
Shree Satyanarayana Press, Cuttack

Price Rs. 200.00
$ 8

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Fakir Mohan University
Vyasa Vihar, Balasore

FOREWORD

Fakir Mohan was an unusual mental giant ever Orissa produced in the mid 19th century. The story of his life is as fascinating as the legacy of his literary achievements. He is aptly regarded as the father of Oriya prose literature. His life and work present a veritable spectrum of the socio-economic scenario of Orissa while it was reeling under the colonial rule. It was he who breathed a new life to our mother-tongue and resurrected our moribund identity.

Fakir Mohan had an unimaginable vision even in the 19th century. He was endowed with a vision that was global. He was not at all a cult addict, though he favoured Brahmoism. The edifice he raised in his Shantikanan (his place of residence at Balasore) stands for integration of world religions (Hinduism, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism etc.) – a prop for living a manly life, which he himself sought and practised. His was the religion of humanism, free from odious fanaticism, thus proving that he was one of the earliest secularists of India and the World. He was a true representative of the communal amity as is evident from his own name and the circumstances of his childhood.

He was an avid student of the university of life which certified him as a progressive teacher, an expedient administrator, a great nationalist, a linguist and a creative writer of newer dimensions, and above all, a social reformer with definite commitments. This University is fortunate to have been named after this great personality and architect of Orissa.

This University has, to its credit, two publications on Fakir Mohan : *Fakir Mohan Senapati & his Times,* 2004 by Prof. J.K. Samal and another, *Fakir Mohan Darpan*, 2006 in Oriya by Prof. Kailash Pattanaik. This third volume **Vyasakavi Fakir Mohan - The Precursor of a New Era** authored by Prof Rajkishore Mishra at the request of the University is indeed a valuable addition in paying our tribute to Fakir Mohan, the Vyasakavi. This research-based document seeks to reach out to our non-Oriya readers and neo-researchers. The beauty of this volume lies in its reflections on the hitherto unexplored aspects of Fakir Mohan's novels, poems and other literary creations; besides, an attempt has been made, in this volume, to provide a fresh look to some of the points on the basis of evidence in old journals and archival records.

The University expresses its grateful thanks to the eminent poet and litterateur Padmashree Dr. Ramakant Rath for evincing a keen interest in publication of such a monograph on Fakir Mohan.

The University expresses its thanks to the eminent teacher of English literature, Prof. Trilochan Misra, former Vice-Chancellor of Sri Jagannath Sanskrit University for kindly reviewing the manuscript and suggesting modifications wherever necessary. Prof. Rajkishore Mishra deserves grateful thanks of the University for the trouble he has taken to write the book. The University thanks Messers Vidyapuri, Cuttack profusely for bringing out the book in about a fortnight's time on our behalf.

Sukadev Nanda.

PREFACE

Fakirmohan Senapati (1843-1918) is a great name – a potent force in making the history of modern Orissa and a leading light in shaping the course of modern Oriya literature. His role as an educationist, journalist, saviour of the Oriya language and champion of the Oriya Movement, that led to Orissa's emergence as a separate province in 1936, has earned him a permanent place among the makers of modern Orissa. His authentic portrayal of the stark realities in contemporary Orissa's social life in the living Oriya idiom has won him the titles, 'father of modern Oriya novel' and 'chief architect of modern Oriya prose'. A stalwart in history, Fakirmohan is an all-time great in literature.

Fakirmohan is a versatile writer – an innovator of two new genres, eg short story (Rebati, 1898) and autobiography (*Mo Atma-jivana Charita*, pub. 1927) and of quite a few new modes, eg verse translation (*Ramayana*, 1880), travel account / light satire (*Utkala Bhramanam*, 1892), social novel (*Chha Mana Atha Guntha*, 1897-99), historical novel (*Lachhama*, 1901), literary essay (Narijatira Parivartana, 1868) and *belles lettres* (Nananka·Panji, 1898).

Fakirmohan started his literary career late in life with poetic translation of the epics and wrote soulful poems after the death of his wife. Like Valmiki's, the Vyasakavi's poetry is born of agony. Opposed to the vogue of ornate tradition, it is simple and natural –the poetry of fact – heart-felt in the lyrical pieces, in some, a cry of the heart.

However, Fakirmohan's forte is fiction – the novel alongwith the short story – dealing incisively with the social realities under the impact of colonialism. He is the spokesman-in-chief of the social malady of the 19th century. His realistic fiction offers a comic vision of life by way of focussing on aberrations from the norms in order to suggest a wholesome view of life that is desirable.

Of the novels of Fakirmohan, *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* is a hallmark and a world class masterpiece. Its central theme is exploitation of the innocent and their extermination at the scaffold of guileful greed. Behind the surface theme of exploitation there lies the deeper theme of barrenness, that of the agrarian poor, multiplied by the loss of their sources of life – the cultivable land and the milch cow. Life's purposelessness is signified by the water symbol of Asura dighi, a rendezvous of village gossips, and faith by Budhi Mangala, a decoy duck for mongering superstition. The chowkidar and the Daroga stand for the administration and the law. Against this ramshackle the tragic shadow of barrenness looms large. A ghastly picture of decadence that might have appalled the novelist !

If novel is a realistic picture of life, Fakirmohan is the earliest novelist of India. Prior to him Indian novel dealt with romantic or adventure stories. Sarat Chandra's social novels appeared in the early decades of the 20th century and Premchand's *Godan*, that has some resemblance to this novel, came more than three decades later.

Fakirmohan's prose vibrating with life is a model for posterity. His language comprising common idiom and popular turns of speech is ubiquitously leavened with many-toned humour and multipronged irony.

The present monograph by Prof. Rajkishore Mishra is a reliable guidebook – comprehensive and well-documented. It has taken into consideration the lights of the latest research about Fakirmohan's life and works. And it gives a holistic account of his literary activities with complete analyses of the poems, short stories and novels. Being a handbook, its presentation is a deviation from the conventional. In lieu of a biographical *cum* interpretative account of the writer it presents fact-based information (fact sheets) as to the relevant biographical data, historical data and Fakirmohan's contribution to Oriya readership successively. A useful publication by the University named after him.

Trilochan Misra
Former Vice-Chancellor,
Shri Jagannath Sanskrit University, Puri

INTRODUCTION

The present monograph is designed to acquaint primarily the non-Oriya readers with the versatile genius Fakir Mohan Senapati, an illustrious son of Orissa who flourished in the mid-19th century in colonial India. His pioneering quest for Oriya identity and his concern for languishing peasantry and social deprivation have given him a distinct stamp of being the architect of modern Orissa. His emergence in the then Orissa's socio- cultural ambience was probably a required necessity which Fakir Mohan fulfilled in a spectacular way.

Fakirmohan's name has been spelt variously. In 1866, when his book *Jeevana Charita* appeared, his name was printed as 'Phukeer Mohun Senaputy.' Probably his name was then anglicized. Later, his name appeared as 'Phakeera Mohana'. Subsequently writers spelt out his name both as Fakir Mohan and Fakirmohan. The present title of this book retains the popular spelling of his name Fakirmohan.

This monograph makes a brief discussion of Fakirmohan's varied literary endowments, eg writing textbooks, making translations, writing poetry, short stories, novels, and other miscellaneous works. Each genre of his literary craftsmanship certainly demands an exhaustive appraisal, which has not been possible here because of limitations of space.

Fakirmohan's periodical writings, reportings, essays, book reviews, reflective discourses, travel accounts, letters and speeches have also a special charm which need a deeper analysis. His assumptions of various roles in public life and his complex administrative experiences demand a fresh look for fuller comprehension of such a great personality. An humble attempt in this regard has been initiated here by the author.

While writing this book, enough care has been taken to correlate historical data in the light of latest recent research findings which would obviously create a new focus to assess Fakirmohan's times.

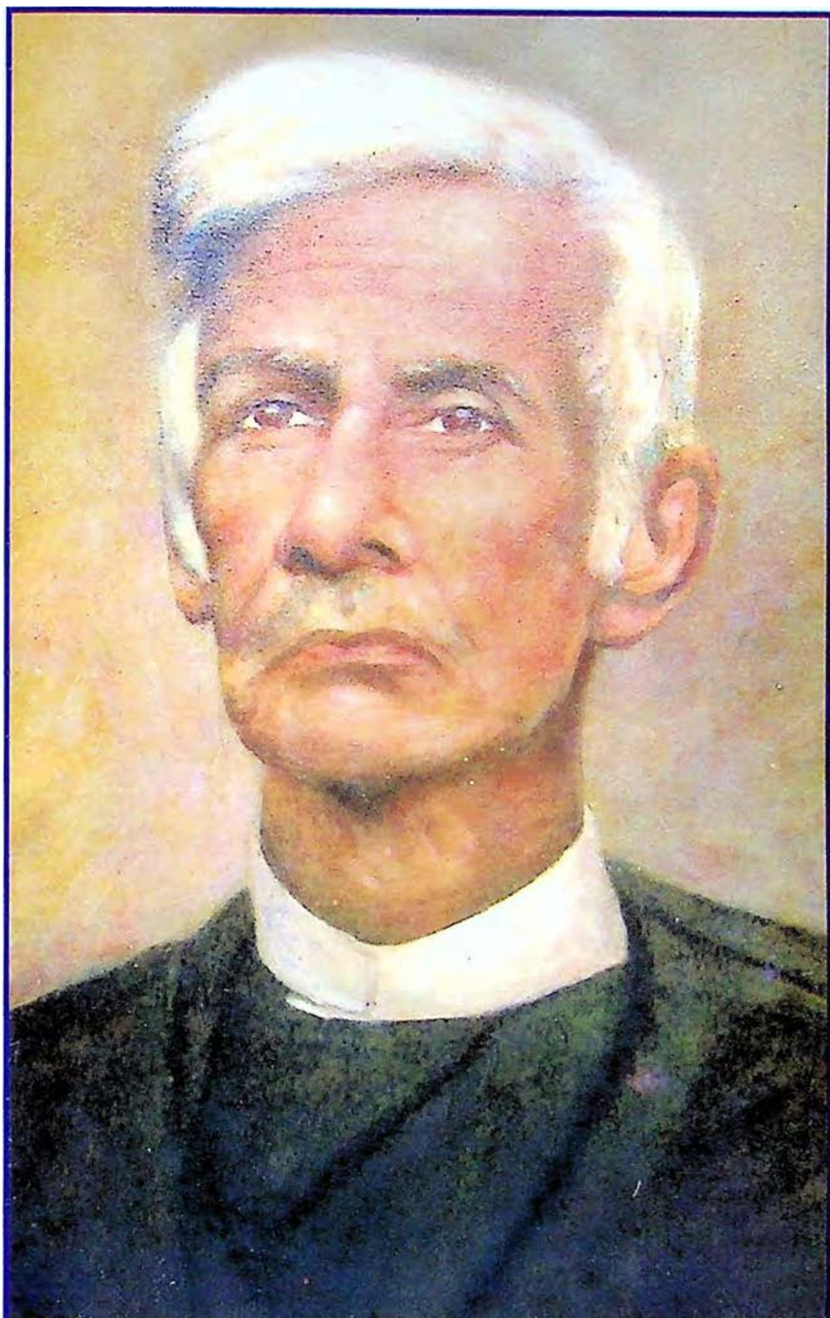
The author is grateful to Professor Sukadev Nanda, Vice-Chancellor, Fakir Mohan University for giving him an opportunity to prepare this monograph.

The author is grateful to two eminent scholars Prof. Gaganendranath Dash and Debendra Kumar Dash for their ungrudging assistance with regard to latest data inputs, archival findings and valuable suggestions during the preparation of this monograph.

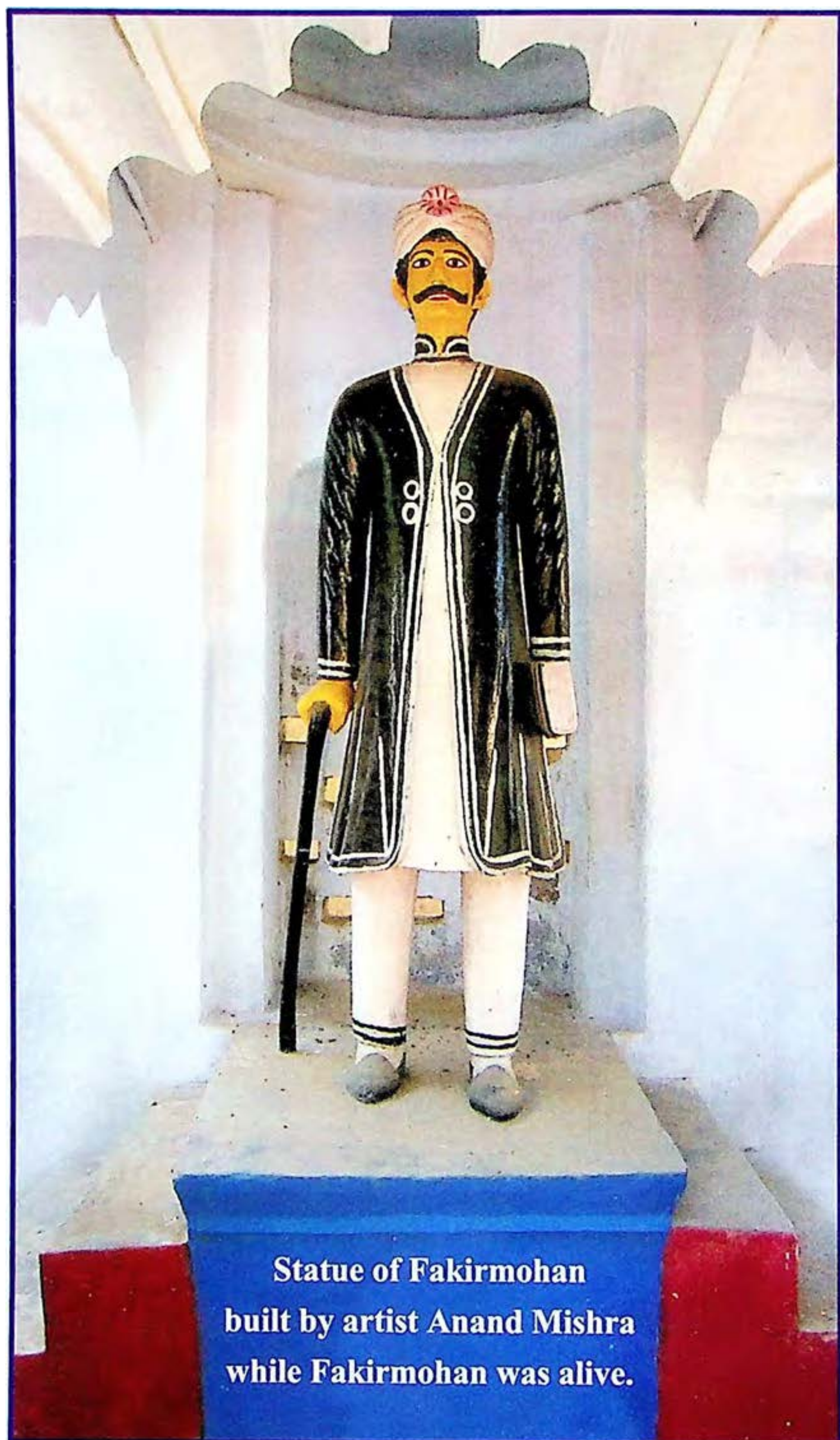
The author is immensely grateful to Professor Trilochan Misra, Former Vice-Chancellor, Shri Jagannath Sanskrit University for his kind encouragement and review.

The author is obliged to Dr Surendra Kumar Moharana for his timely assistance.

The author thankfully acknowledges the permission of Fakirmohan Sahitya Parishad, Balasore for including in this book the translation of 'Rebati' by Prof. B.K. Satpathy, published in their book, *Phakirmohan Senapati : His Life and Literature* in 1984.



Fakirmohan Senapati
[13.1.1843 – 14.6.1918]


Statue of Fakirmohan built by artist Anand Mishra while Fakirmohan was alive.

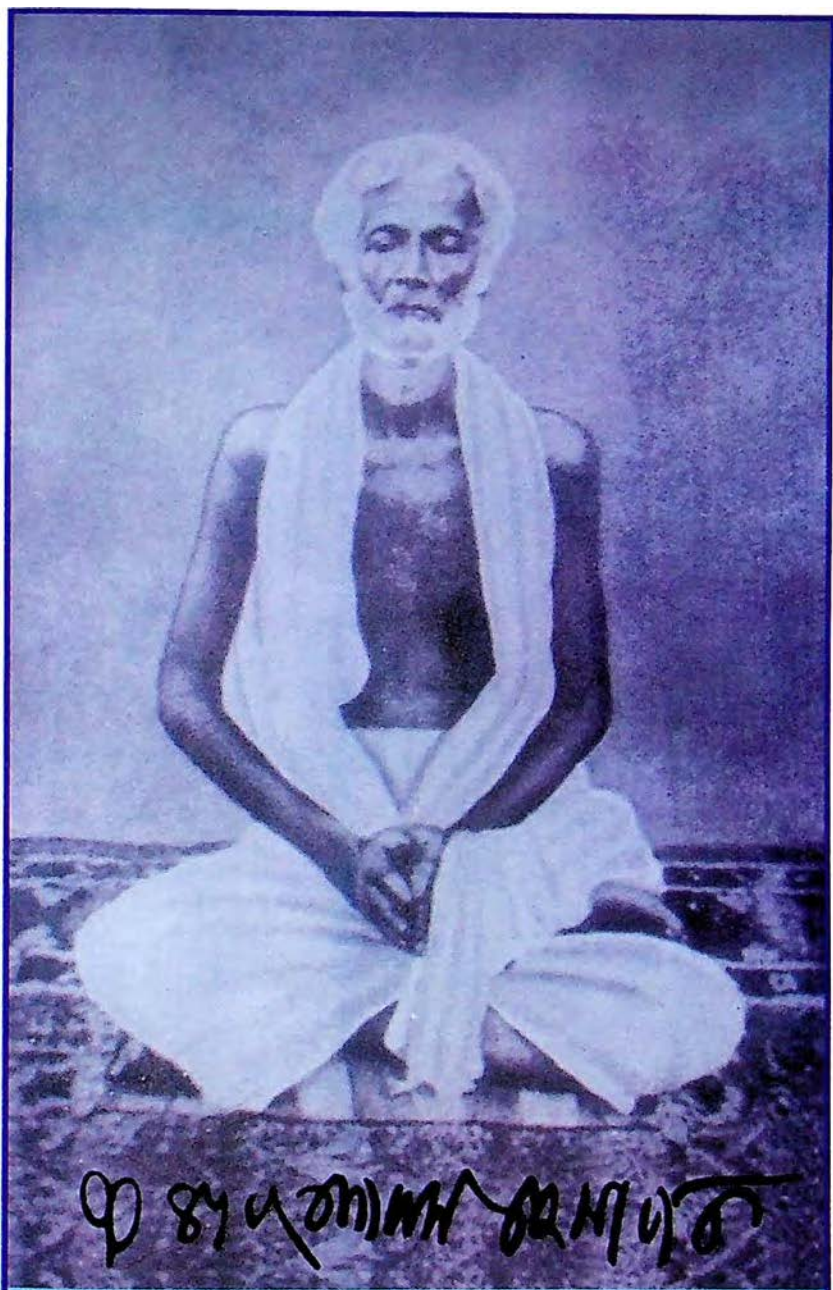
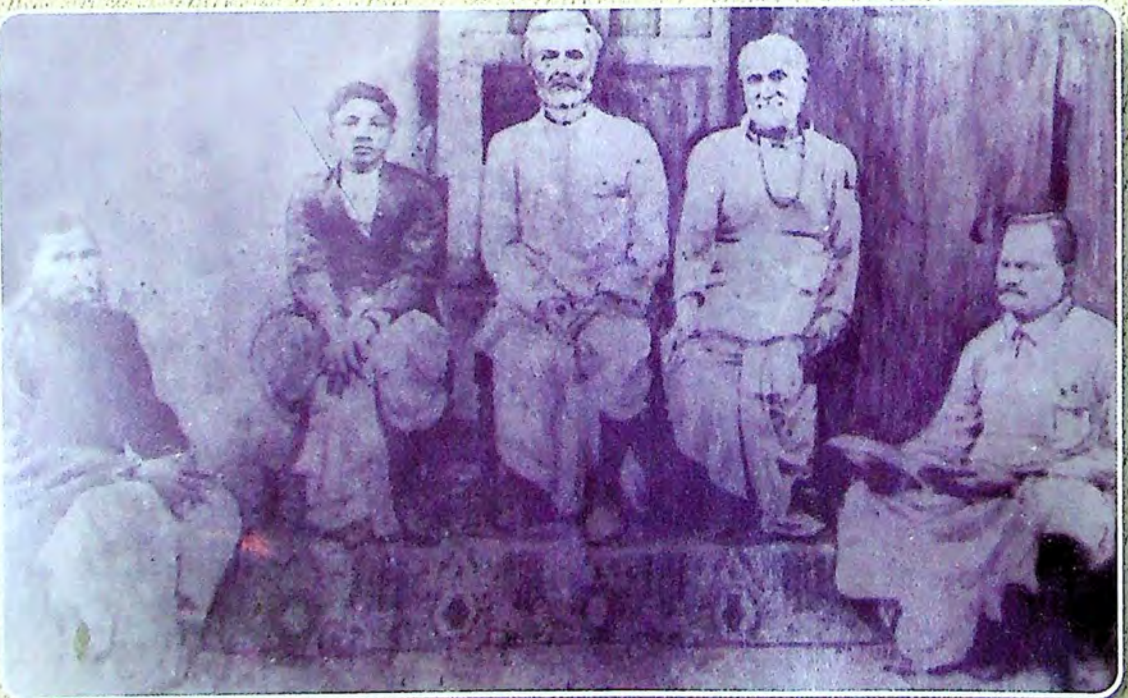


Photo of Fakirmohan Senapati



Fakirmohan and his son Mohinimohan



Gangadhar Meher, Raja Saheb, Fakirmohan, Dharanidhar Mishra & Padmapur Dewan



Fakirmohan's Vision of Integration of all religions
Sarba Dharma Samanwaya Mandira
at Shanti Kanan, Balasore





Reformer Raja Ram Monohar Ray

Guru Nanak





The Buddha

Adi Shankaracharya



The Bhagavad Gita



Odiya Bhagavat



Shri Chaitanya



Jesus Christ

CONTENTS

Fact sheet III

THE PROLOGUE

Fakirmohan Senapati, a rare genius was born in the village Mallikasapur near Balasore town of Orissa on 13 January, 1843. He became an orphan when he was less than two. Parental bliss was denied to him. He was deprived of formal education. Misfortune goaded him all through. His eldest issue by his second wife died in infancy and his loving wife too breathed her last when he was fifty-one. The relation between him and his only son became strained at his old age. Physical and mental ill-health frequented him many a time which impeded his further flowering.

How Fakirmohan braved his life during the inhospitable times under the colonial rule is a fascinating study, a living fiction.

Fakirmohan's Memoir or *Autobiography* gives an inadequate account of his life's itinerary. It was first serialised in the Oriya literary journal, *Utkala Sahitya* from its July issue of 1918 to the January issue of 1921. It may be mentioned here that Fakirmohan died on 14 June 1918. The serialised portions of his autobiography are a posthumous publication running over twenty-six chapters. It excludes two important chapters, eg. (i) his role in resisting the move to abolish the teaching of Oriya in schools, and (ii) his effort to establish a Girls' School at Balasore. These two chapters were published in 1917 in two issues of the Oriya journal the *Satyavadi*, edited and published by Pandit Gopabandhu Das when Fakirmohan was alive.

Fakirmohan disinherited his son Mohinimohan as per his Last Will and Testament dated the 19th June 1914. Thereafter, at the age of seventy-two he started writing his own *Autobiography* in a haste. His nagging illness, remorse and the onset of senility might have distracted him, as some of the important events described in the *Autobiography* are not corroborative with government records and archival findings.

The *Autobiography* came to light in a book format in 1927 by his disinherited son Mohinimohan. Scholars became critical both about the earlier serialised features published in the *Utkala Sahitya* posthumously and the *Autobiography* published in 1927. Mohinimohan's publication, titled *Fakirmohan's Autobiography* is added up with six more chapters of which two are supposedly written anew. It also excludes five important chapters including the above-mentioned two articles published in the *Satyavadi* in 1917 which claimed 'Excerpts from old Fakirmohan's *Autobiography*.'

The above discussion only aims at acquainting the readers with controversies in respect of certain omissions and commissions in Fakirmohan's *Autobiography*. The Fact Sheet-I makes an attempt to furnish credible data inputs and historical information. All said and done, Mohinimohan deserves credit in making available the most valuable literary assets of his father to the Oriya reading public.

Fakirmohan's ingenious literary craftsmanship spiced with a sense of cheery humour and critical vision, his deep insight into the socio-economic changes of his times, his passion for Oriya nationalism and his crusade against anti-Oriya language movement won him many a laurel. He knew his country folk well both in the Mughalbandi tract and in the Garjat Mahals. He was a critical observer of the administrative machinery run both by the Company government and the Crown. His concern for the people who were wronged has become a focal point in all his literary works. The decline of the age-old landed aristocracy, creation of a band of new greedy, usurious zamindars under the British administration, loss of maritime opulence at the Balasore entrepot and sudden cessation of the hub of shipping activity at the quayside of Balasore disheartened Fakirmohan to a great extent. The judiciary system introduced by the British had abundant loopholes which never escaped the vigilant eye of Fakirmohan. He made use of a special literary device to caricature the system while keeping himself safe aloof at a safe distance. He let loose a gust of wit, humour and irony in depicting the forces of evil which by the time of Fakirmohan were manifested

in various forms, eg land-grabbing by neo-zamindars, wide-spread fear for the British officials and their 'most obedient' Indian servants, ridiculous religious fanaticism and prejudices reinforced by pseudo-scholarly brahmins and fake saints, repeated plunder by professional burglars and the decay of socio-cultural values ascribable to the new British educational system spearheaded by the western Missionaries.

The **Fact-sheet-II** briefly analyses the socio-political and economic scenario of Orissa prior to the advent of Fakirmohan and also during the period he lived.

The **Fact-sheet-III** presents Fakirmohan as a literary artist par-excellence. People of Orissa venerate him as the *Vyasakavi* for his unique translation of Valmiki's *Ramayana* and Maharshi Vyasadeva's *Mahabharat*, the *Bhagavad Gita, Khila Harivamsa* besides some selected *Upanisads* into Oriya verse from. The court of Bamara felicitated him in 1916 with the honorific of *Saraswati*. His passion for versification and his innovative prose style permeating social realism, as reflected in his short stories and fictions, have made him distinctive among his contemporaries in India. The age which shaped such a genius in colònial Orissa is aptly termed the Era of Fakirmohan. Its distant echo is only heard in the 15th century-Orissa in Sudramuni Sarala Das, the Father of Oriya language and literature. Fakirmohan Senapati is verily the Father of modern Oriya fiction, the champion of Oriya lingua franca and the precursory architect of modern Orissa. He anticipated Orissa as a language-based Separate Province, even eighteen years before it actually happened. His long association with the Utkala Sammilani or the Utkal Union Conference from the year of its inception in 1903 till death and his active participation in the functioning of the Utkala Sahitya Samaj bear testimony to his cherished dream of a united Orissa, his beloved motherland. His delegation to the Indian National Congress in 1889 (Bombay), 1890 (Calcutta) and in 1898 (Madras) also speaks of his participatory vision of freedom that the national movement would ensure in future.



FACT SHEET I

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA AND THE CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Brajamohan alias Fakirmohan was born on 13 January 1843, 1250 *Sal, Makar Samkranti* (First day of Sun's transit to Capricorn) in the lunar month of *Magha*, on *Trayodasi tithi* in the forenoon at the suburban village of Mallikasapur, Balasore town, Balasore.

July 1844 :

Loss of parents

Fakirmohan's father, Lakshman Charan Senapati, was a contractor engaged in sail-sewing trade when Balasore was a centre of flourishing marine trade. While returning from Puri after witnessing the famous Return Car Festival (*Bahuda Yatra*) of Lord Jagannath Lakshman Charan died of cholera near the Bindusagar tank in Bhubaneswar. Fakirmohan's grandmother Kuchila Dei was present at the time of her son's premature death.

September, 1844, 1252 *Sal*, *Bhadrav shukla astami*. Fakirmohan's mother, Tulasi Dei also died at Balasore after prolonged physical and mental suffering.

Change of name of Brajamohan to Fakirmohan

His widowed granny was the sole support of orphan Brajamohan. She took resort to two venerable *Pirs* in Balasore for divine intervention in curing her grandson of chronic diarrhoea and piles. Her faith led her to change the child's name from Brajamohan to Fakirmohan.

While tracing his genealogical tree Fakirmohan refers to one Hanu Malla of Kusinda village of Kendrapara who served in the Maratha's peasant militia. He moved to Balasore where he remained in charge of the Phulbar pass as Senapati or commander of a large retinue of Paiks. He enjoyed nine hundred acres of tax-free land for his service. His grandson was Senapati Kusa Malla, the husband of Kuchila Dei, Fakirmohan's loving granny. Kusa had two sons - Purusottama and Lakshmana Charan. Purusottama Senapati, his father's elder brother had two sons, Nityananda and Radhamohan. Out of the two sons of Lakshmana Charan the eldest one Chaitanya Charan had died before Fakirmohan was born. Lest a curse might befall Fakirmohan, his left ear was pierced and a tiny gold ring was inserted - a practice that was still in vogue among the folk.

1847 : Fakirmohan's learning of the Oriya alphabet was interrupted by his continuous illness.

1849-53 : Fakirmohan's learning was further discontinued again on account of his prolonged illness.

1854 Formal education was resumed under the tutorage of the village school teacher, Baishnav Mohanty.

1855 Fakirmohan joined as an apprentice in his family trade of sail-sewing which was a contractual occupation. He worked under a manager who was in charge of sewing various requisitioned sails for ships at the maritime entrepot of Balasore. His father's elder brother Purusottam Senapati set him on this job as a child labour.

1856 *Marriage* Fakirmohan married Lilavati, daughter of Narayana Parida of Manikkhumba village. It was an unhappy marriage because of his wife's temper.

1857-58		Fakirmohan acquired skill in Bengali, Persian and Sanskrit languages. He studied for some time in the Bengali vernacular school at Barabati, Balasore town, but had to discontinue as he could not pay his school dues regularly.
1858-61	*As Asst. Teacher*	Fakirmohan joined as Third Teacher at the Barabati School at a salary about half of the normal salary.
1861		Fakirmohan passed the Middle Vernacular privately.
1863 Feb.		The salt manufacture in Balasore was closed for good on Feb. 28, 1863.
1864	*As Headmaster*	Fakirmohan joined the Balasore Mission School as Headmaster where he continued upto September, 1872. His eight-year career was interrupted as he had to resign the post because of the anti-Hindu stance and prejudice of the school secretary Mr. A. Miller. He was reappointed Headmaster when the new Secretary Mr. E.C.B. Hallam took over the management.
		During the brief interim period he taught Bengali to Mr. R.H.Posey, Collector-in-charge, Balasore and the Joint Magistrate Mr Mayers. Mr. Posey appointed him as Munshi in the Collector's office on temporary basis.
1865	*Allegiance to the Brahmo cult*	Isan Chandra Basu, a Bengali preacher of Brahmo cult came to Balasore. Though Fakirmohan disliked his antipathy to Oriya language, he was somewhat influenced by the doctrine of Brahmo. Later, he came in contact with another Bengali Brahmo follower, Prasanna Kumar Chaturya, an official in the Salt Office. Finally he became convert to Brahmoism and attended discourses organised by the Brahmo community at Motiganj Bazar. Fakirmohan, however, was averse to the Brahmo preachers who introduced consumption of alcohol in Brahmo ritual.

1866 A group of young intellectuals - Madhusudan Das (Fourth Teacher of Balasore District School), young poet Radhanath Ray and a Deputy Munsiff used to meet everyday in the summer months on the brick stairs of the Garagaria tank, to the south of Motigang Bazar in Balasore Town.

The Trio : Fakirmohan, Radhanath & Madhusudan

Fakirmohan's intense yearning to learn English right from 1864-65 now came to be somewhat fulfilled. With the help of the *English First Book* and English dictionary he could study *Arabian Nights, Robinson Crusoe, Bengal Peasant Life* and the *Bible*. He soon became proficient in the language.

1866 The Great Famine devastated Orissa during the ninth regnal year of the Raja of Orissa. Fakirmohan gives a harrowing account of this natural calamity in his Autobiography. Mr. T.E. Ravenshaw was then the newly appointed Commissioner.

Fakirmohan emerged as a patriotic son of the soil. He championed the formation of the *Utkala Bhasa Unnati Vidhayini Samaj* (Oriya Language Development Society).

Translator and Textbook writer

He took active role in the formation of D.P. Das & Co, which aimed at publication of ancient Oriya texts, but it could not make much headway.

Fakirmohan authored *Jivana Charita* (translation of Iswarchandra Vidyasagar's Bengali biographies) and *Utkala Saral Vyakarana (Simple Grammar · In Oriya)* which were published by the Baptist Mission Press, Calcutta.

1867 Mr. R.L. Martin, the Inspector of Schools offered the post of Second Pandit to Fakirmohan at the Cuttack English School to teach in Normal classes. Rev. E.C.B Hallam, Secretary of the Mission School prevailed over Fakirmohan not to accept the offer.

He visits to Calcutta in connection with the purchase of a printing press.

1867 June — Death of Fakirmohan's granny Kuchila Dei.

1868 May — Fakirmohan assisted E.C.B. Hallam who was preapring the manuscript of his book *Oriya Grammar for English Students.* This book was published in 1874.

1868 July — The third printing press in Orissa - the Balasore Utkal Press under the banner of P.M. Senapati & Co. was set up at Balasore. From August 1868 to May 1871 *Bodhadayini O Baleswora Sambadavahika* was published as a monthly and from July 1871 it came out as a fortnightly.

The Printing Press at Balasore

Fakirmohan took active role in setting up an Elementary School at Remuna and a Girls' School at Balasore. Balasore District Collector, Mr. John Beames supported Fakirmohan in the promotion of female education in Balasore.

1869 — Fakirmohan rendered some assistance to John Beames in preparing his outstanding quinquelingual book, *Comparative Grammar of Indian Languages.*

1869 — Fakirmohan's *Bharat Varshara Itihasa,* 1st part (History of India, part-I) was printed at Balasore Utkala Press, Balasore which was subsequently selected as a textbook for the scholarship examination.

1870 — Fakirmohan's *Bharata Varshara Itihasa*, Part-II and *Ankamala* (2nd edn) were published. Perhaps the first edition of *Ankamala* was published in 1867.

1872 — His wife Lilavati Devi died when Fakirmohan was twenty-nine. Fakirmohan was in Puri then in the company of the Raja of Nilagiri. Lilavati was survived by her only daughter Mahilamani.

Death of his first wife and second marriage

His second marriage with Krushna Kumari, an eleven-year-old girl, daughter of Siva Prasad Choudhuri, Head clerk in the Criminal Court was solemnised.

1872 Fakirmohan was nominated as member to the Local Education Committee.

1873 Bengali Language as a medium of instruction in the schools of Orissa was given a goodbye, and in its place Oriya was introduced. During this period Madhusudan Rao was in Balasore.

Fakirmohan's long career as an Administrator.

Oct. 1872 - March 1876

NILGIRI

John Beames, the Balasore District Collector recommended Fakirmohan as the Dewan of Nilgiri, a feudatory state. The Raja of Nilgiri was Krushnachandra Mardaraja. Fakirmohan, during his Dewanship at Nilgiri, managed to clear the dense thickets near the Fort, and constructed a stone bridge over the *wadi* which used to become inaccessible during the rains. He also constructed a road stretching over five kilometres in the first phase. The Nirmala Market in honour of Her Royal Highness was set up by Fakirmohan. He took advantage of the topography and raised a vegetable farm where he grew peas, cabbage and potatoes. Mulberries were also grown to produce silk. He started a tea garden too on hill slopes.

There was a rift in the royal family. Fakirmohan was drawn into controversy. Further, a tenants' revolt (because of increase in revenue levied on the quarries) in 1875 completely exasperated Fakirmohan. He incurred the displeasure of Mr. Ravenshaw. He resigned and left Nilgiri in March, 1872.

June 1876 Fakirmohan met John Beames at Cuttack. The latter recommended him for the post of Dewan of Dompada.

Aug. 1876-Aug.1877

DOMPADA

Fakirmohan served as the Dewan of Dompada *killajat* or estate. Jaganmohan Ray was then the Chief Deputy Collector for Cuttack district. The Raja of Dompada was Raghunath Mansimha Bhramarabara Ray and his manager was Nidhi Pattanayak whom Fakirmohan succeeded. The tenants in Dompada became intransigent and refused to pay the proposed hike on land rent as per the fresh revenue assessment. The former Dewan Nidhi Pattanayak and some village headmen took the lead of agitation. John Beames, Collector, Cuttack made a second official visit to Dompada in February, 1877 (as attested by *Utkala Dipika,* 12/5 and not Dec., 1871 as recorded in the *Autobiography.*) John Beames' first visit to Dompada was on December 4, 1873, four months after he became the acting Commissioner (i.e. August 12, 1873. His first visit to Dompada was urgently required to foil peasants' revolt against the Raja.). The Raja refused to meet the Collector, but Fakirmohan by his ready wit and ingenious strategy could resolve the crisis, and upheld the honour of the Raja. The Raja complimented Fakirmohan for his diligence and rewarded him.

Aug. 1877- Feb.,1883

While Fakirmohan was serving the Dompada estate as Dewan, he had received his appointment letter to join his new assignment as Asst. Manager in the feudatory state of Dhenkanal. Since he had a lot of work pending and the Raja of Dompada insisted on completion of land survey, Fakirmohan bought more time to join his new assignment. The *Autobiography* records the date of Fakirmohan's joining in Dhenkanal as 1 November, 1877. *The Utkala*

Dipika which had been candidly monitoring Fakirmohan's whereabouts mentioned the date of joining in Dhenkanal was in the first week of August, 1877.

Consequent upon the death of Raja Bhagiratha Mahendra Bahadur, Dhenkanal came under the Court of Wards and it remained so till the Maharaja's adopted minor son Dinabandhu Mahendra Bahadur (the third son of the Raja of Baud) became major. Fakirmohan joined Dhenkanal in this period of transition.

DHENKANAL

Fakirmohan's stay in Dhenkanal (five years and six months) was not altogether pleasant. Commissioner T.E. Ravenshaw and Cuttack Collector John Beames were transferred and Mr. Smith joined as new Commissioner during this period. His well-wisher Ray Nanda Kishore Dasa Bahadur, Assistant Superin-tendent, however, stood by him during his troubled days at Dhenkanal.

Personal tragedy

A son, Manomohana, was born to him in 1878 at Dhenkanal who survived hardly for six months. Fakirmohan started translating Valmiki's Sanskrit *Ramayana* into Oriya verse, the daily recital of which lessened the grief of his disconsolate wife. The first canto (*Bala Kanda*) was printed and was distributed free. In 1880, the 1st canto containing 80 chapters was published by the Cuttack Printing Co. which carried a dedication in English to his benefactor John Beames Esquire, B.C.S. The second canto, *Ayodhya Kanda* of the *Ramayana* was published in 1881.

Translation of the Ramayana

Birth of Mohinimohan

Fakirmohan's second son, Mohinimohan was born on 11 October 1881. Fakirmohan was not keeping good health in Dhenkanal. He came back to Balasore on leave and therefrom tendered his resignation sometime in May-June 1883.

1883 Fakirmohan became Asst. Secretary of the National Society of Balasore.

He had to remain without any salaried job thereafter for more than a year.

Aug. 1884-March 1887

DASPALLA

Fakirmohan joined Daspalla as Dewan in August, 1884. During his stay of two years and seven months in Daspalla as Dewan, Fakirmohan could complete the rest of the cantos of the *Ramayana* and started translating the *Mahabharata*.

Fakirmohan was reminded of the comment of John Beames, the Superintendent of Garjat Mahals, on Chaitanya Bhanja Deo, the Raja of Daspalla. According to Beames the Raja was a dolt and incapable of administering his state. Mr. Metcalf, the new Superintendent also had the same impression on the Raja which Fakirmohan had himself realised to be true.

Fakirmohan could settle the boundary dispute between Yoramo and Anugul with the aid of an old survey map.

He introduced the cultivation of cabbage, peas, turnips and radish for the first time in Daspalla which, of course, failed to enthuse the people.

In an interesting episode Fakirmohan fondly reminisced how he was once sharing a steamer-journey with Radhanath Ray in a stormy weather and how asthmatic Radhanath made his sole effort to preserve his treasurable pack of opium which he had been using as a curative drug against asthma.

May-Aug.1887

PALALAHARA

Fakirmohan's next assignment was the Dewanship in the heavily forested estate Palalahara. As per the report of the *Utkala Dipika* Fakirmohan joined there

on the aftermath of a tenants' revolt. The Raja, charming though, was highly extravagant and he loved to indulge himself in lavish expenditure. Fakirmohan was conferred with First Class Magistrate power. He was also to act in the position of Munsif, but he had virtually nothing to do in Palalahara. He busied himself in translating the *Mahabharat*. The Raja was not enthusiastic about Fakirmohan either. Fakirmohan got tired of being paid a high salary for nothing, and hence, sought to resign.

Thus, after four or five months' stay in Palalahara, Fakirmohan came back to his Balasore residence without any promise of subsequent appointments.

Dec. 1887-March 1892

Fakirmohan joined against the vacant post of Manager in the feudatory state of Keonjhar in December 1887. He was stationed at Anandapur. The victory of Maharaja Dhanurjaya Narayana Bhanj in a legal dispute in the High Court enhanced the image of Fakirmohan as he had pursued the case in all earnestness. He also handled carefully a criminal case instituted against the officials of Anandapur for unlawful detention of some Mughalbandi offenders. The Maharaja of Keonjhar finally won that case, and Fakirmohan was rewarded.

KEONJHAR Fakirmohan had enough expertise in land survey. He could successfully solve the border dispute between Chhota Nagpur and Keonjhar.

Fakirmohan could win over the Maharaja to set up a printing press at Anandapur to print legal forms and leaflets for use in the cutchery.

Bhuiyan or the Peasants' Revolt - 1891

The description of ryots' or peasants' uprising in Keonjhar as described by Fakirmohan in his *Autobiography* has opened floodgates of controversy among the present Oriya scholars and critics. The data furnished in the *Autobiography* are not fully corroborative with government records and with news-reportings of the time. Since Fakirmohan had to recollect many such events of his life when he was past seventy, he might have erred about dates. But the main trend of the revolt as described by Fakirmohan is certainly a faithful account of the period.

This uprising had a far-reaching effect on Fakirmohan's personality, statesmanship, administrative efficiency and integrity. His loyalty both to the head of the state where he earned his bread and to the British authority whose orders he was committed to carry out was at a stake. It was an intriguing phase of his life. He had uneasy feelings against the British hegemony particularly for their erratic land settlement, general administration and judiciary system as would be evident from his later fictions and *Bharat Varshara Itihasa.* His cryptic remarks against the British jurisprudence vouch it. On the contrary, he was enthusiastic about the rule of benevolent kings, and was always in favour of the people who suffered wrong. Futile plots were contrived against him to denigrate his image and to publicly condemn him as a traitor and machiavellian. He was even taken into custody by a rebel chief where he had to stay in the guarded hideout for ten days as a captive. His final release from his captivity, rescue of royal family, punishment to the obdurate rebel chief and his own voluntary withdrawal from Keonjhar are but the resultant effect of the Peasants' Revolt. The causes and events leading to the revolt are given below. These partly depend on Fakirmohan's *Autobiography* and, to a greater extent, are based on the corroborative government records and press-coverages as chronicled by Gaganendranath Dash in his research publication *Saraswati Fakirmohan : Sahitya and Vyaktitva* (Grantha Mandir, Aug. 2006).

Dhanurjaya Narayan Bhanj ascended the throne of Keonjhar in 1868. The Bhuiyan ryots in the western region of Keonjhar did not accept Dhanurjay as the rightful heir to the throne. Their contention was that he was not the Queen's son but the son of the Raja's concubine *phulavivahi*. They branded him as a usurper and rebelled against the Raja. The dowager Rani who had been fighting a legal battle since 1863 ultimately failed and she incited the tribals. The outraged rebels killed Nanda Kishore Dhal, Raja's Dewan. The revolt was spearheaded by a belligerent ryot, Ratan Naik, supposed to be the grandfather (probably by some distant link) of Dharanidhar, who rose against the Raja as a rebel chief in 1868. The 1868-revolt is also known as Ratan Naik Meli. Ratan and six other rebels were caught and awarded death punishment by the British Government.

The Raja now introduced coercive methods in levying strange taxes and exacting forced labour. His chief accomplices were Asst. Manager of Anandapur, Brajakishore Mahapatra, son of the deceased Dewan Nanda Dhal and Bichitrananda Das, Asst. Manager, stationed in Keonjhar Cutchery. The immediate cause that triggered off the fire of revolt was the cutting of a channel from the Machhakandanajor to Nijgarh (head quarters) through forced labour. This work was in operation under the direct supervision of Bichitrananda Das. Fakirmohan's earlier estimate of the project was around Rs.10,000/- which included the cost of labour. It was disapproved of forthwith by the Raja as it would cost the State exchequer heavily. The Asst. Manager prevailed over the Raja, truncated the design and conscripted Bhuiyan peasants to dig the channel without remuneration. Fakirmohan remained in charge of Anandapur region. Dharanidhara Naik, was a vibrant youngman. He received the survey training at Cuttack with financial assistance from the Raja of Keonjhar. After passing out, he served under the Raja as a surveyor for sometime but was subsequently discharged from his job. He could realise that the Raja was becoming a tyrant. He denounced the forced labour system of the Raja. He organised folk meets, and gradually emerged as the leader of the people. In

otherwords, he heralded a resistance movement against exploitive monarchy and autocracy. His grandfather had laid his life for peoples' cause some twenty-three years back and was a martyr in the eyes of the Bhuiyans.

Dharanidhara and his followers sought the intervention of Superintendent George Toynbee in their petition dated January 23, 1891 and sent copies of it to Mr. Wylly, Manager of Mayurbhanj and also to the Government of Bengal. Dharanidhar also wrote another express letter on 26 May 1891 to the Commissioner to arrest the Raja and forward him physically to appear before his own court.

Mr. Toynbee sought clarification from the Raja. The Raja refuted all charges and sought permission to serve warrants against all ring leaders of the agitation. Mr. Toynbee did not approve of Raja's appeal and cautioned the Raja for making false allegations. Further, the Raja was advised on March 17, 1891 to write to the Superintendent with factual proof, if any.

Dharanidhara was becoming ambitious. His leadership among his tribesmen was hailed and was often blown out of proportion. He first sailed the idea that he was the adopted son of the Maharani or Queen. Later, he self-styled himself as 'Sri Dharanidhara Naik, Surveyor Tikayat, the son of Srimati Bharateswari Swaranamayee Victoria Devi. He signed his missives in English as 'Son of Maharani'. He probably cherised to legitimise his claim as the ruler of Keonjhar by professing loyalty to the Crown.

The situation in Keonjhar was becoming tense. Fakirmohan had to accompany the Raja to Mr. Toynbee who was stationed in Cuttack, for a fresh appraisal on 12 May 1891. After discussion they left Cuttack for Keonjhar. When they reached Ghatagaon on 17.5.1891 (not on 13.5.1891 as described in the *Autobiography*) they heard about the peasants' revolt which had flared up the previous day. The Raja became restless and sought shelter at Anandapur. But Fakirmohan sprang up to action, and commenced his perilous journey towards Keonjhar to save the royal family. On

the way, close to the foothills beyond Kanijora, he was caught by the sentries of Dharanidhara who were waiting in ambush, and was taken to the main Bhuiyan post at the foothill of Bararasi hill on May 19, 1891 (not on May 14 as reported in the *Autobio-graphy*). He remained there as a suspect for a day and on the day following, he was made Minister under the seal and signature of 'Maharani's Son, Dharanidhara.' It shows how much respect Fakirmohan elicited even from the highlanders for his benevolent and humanitarian approach in administration. Dharanidhara could not but commend Fakirmohan's sagacity.

During his captivity, Fakirmohan came to know the secret plans of the Bhuiyan rebels to loot royal treasury and capture the royal family. He strategically endorsed their plan and advised them to procure dynamite bombs from Calcutta for attacking the garrisoned Fort. Fakirmohan thus deliberately bought more time till government troops under either the captainship of Mr Grice or Dawson reached Raja's palace. He also hatched a secret plan of communicating to Bholanath De, the surveyor in Anandapur cutchery through his coded letters. The two letters supposed to have been written by him were independent of each other, but in the *Autobiography* these two have been interlapped into one single letter. One letter refers to the immediate supply of one 'hundred betel leaves' (meant soldiers) and 'two hundred betelnuts' (meant riflemen with bullets). The other letter referred to 'digging a ditch from the north' (meant deployment of police force from Chainbasa) to irrigate the 'sugarcane field' (meant Fort) etc. The letter was twined with three pieces of wire. It is said that the embedded purport of the epistle was decoded by Bholanath De whereupon an army platoon was mobilised from Chainbasa to rescue the royal family, to avert the danger of impending sieze of the Fort and finally to release Fakirmohan.

In the meanwhile, Police Inspector Shashibhusan Ray accompanied by Bhagaban Sardar reached Dharanidhar and delivered Capt. Dawson's letter to him on 24.5.1891. They tried to convince Dharanidhar the consequence of his move, and then returned

to Capt. Dawson on 27.5.1891. Capt. Dawson proceeded from Chainbasa with armed sepoys to arrest Dharanidhara. It is said that Dharanidhar offered little resistance. He surrendered himself on 29.5.1891 (not on 22.5.91 as mentioned in the *Autobiography*) while keeping his head high. It was reported in the *Utkala Dipika* and quoted by the *Sambalpur Hiteisini* that at the time of arrest Dharanidhara raved, 'If I so will, I can slaughter you. But that's not my intent.' After surrender he added, 'whatever I have done, I have done it for the good of the people.'

Dharanidhara and four of his lieutenants were brought to Keonjhar. George Toynbee, the Superintendent of the Feudatory States came to Keonjhar from Cuttack to try the offences of Dharani, and if required, to depose the king. Fakirmohan prepared a report on behalf of the king wherein he tried to prove that the outbreak was the outcome of Dharanidhara's craziness. Toynbee was visibly displeased with Fakirmohan for shielding the incompetent Raja. (Later, Madhusudan Das fought the king's case as his counsel in the Court of the Lt. Governor, Sir Charles Elliot, and proved Raja's innocence.)

Mr. Toynbee, Superintendent of Feudatory States was aware of Raja's inefficiency and his callousness to the wellbeing of his subjects. He was in favour of divesting of Raja's power. He also ensured Raja's temporary absence from Keonjhar.

Mr. George Toynbee on his way back to Cuttack camped at Anandapur where he announced his verdict on Dharanidhara. He sentenced Dharanidhara to seven years imprisonment (not five years as recorded in the *Autobiography*).

The Peasants' Revolt did not die a natural death. An uneasy atmosphere still rent the kingdom.

Sensing the gravity of situation Fakirmohan apprised Mr. H.P. Wylly, the then Manager of Keonjhar on September 7, 1891 of the wicked and malicious activities of the former Asst. Manager, Braja Kishore Mohapatra who had been suspended earlier by Mr. Wylly. Braja Kishore was provoking ryots in Anandapur

region not to deposit taxes and not to obey the orders of Fakirmohan, the manager. According to Brajakishore, Fakirmohan had incurred the Raja's displeasure and hence, his orders should not be honoured. Fakirmohan also stated in his letter to Mr Wylly how Brajakishore was planning to send petitions alleging him to the government representatives at Cuttack and Calcutta. In his letter to Mr. Wylly, Fakirmohan pleaded his loyalty to the Raja though the latter considered him a hostile force because he was obeying orders of the higher authority. Fakirmohan had also expressed his desire to resign the post of manager before the Raja staged a come back from Cuttack to Keonjhar to resume his powers.

Three days after the despatch of Fakirmohan's letter to Mr. Wylly, two petitions from Anandapur were sent to the Chief Secretary, Government of Bengal on September 10, 1891. The second petition was made by Bihari Patnaik of Anandapur directly accusing Fakirmohan for undertaking atrocious measures in realising government revenue. Signatories in these two petitions were the beguiled peasants of Anandapur and of Athagarh including some personal servants of the Raja. Bihari had a personal grudge against Fakirmohan as the latter had suspended him from the post of accountant for embezzlemt while Bihari was in charge of the government granary at Orali Dandapata.

The Bengal government sent back these two petitions to Mr. H.P. Wylly, Manager of Keonjhar for a thorough probe. Mr. Wylly dismissed these accusations and grievances as false and fabricated.

On 18 February 1892 the Lt. Governor came on Orissa tour and had his camp at Bhadrak. The issue of governance of Keonjhar was on his agenda. Nearly two hundred subjects both from the hill tracts and from Anandapur called on the Lt. Governor and demanded the ouster of the present Raja. They also proposed an alternative. In hard case, a good manager might be provided to the kingdom. There was, however no allegation against Fakirmohan. Fakirmohan also met the Lt. Governor under orders from Superintendent, Cuttack. His meeting with Lt. Governor was quite cordial.

On his way back from Bhadrak to Anandapur on elephant back, Fakirmohan composed a verse-satire in Oriya titled *Utkala Bhramanam* (Orissa Tour). The manuscript was immediately printed. Anandapur is proud of bringing out the 1st canto of Fakirmohan's Orissa Tour in February, 1892.

Fakirmohan had lost his zeal to render any more service to the Raja of Keonjhar as the Raja had a lot of prejudices against him. He had also earlier communicated his feelings to the government and had sought to resign. Ray Nandakishore Dasa was appointed as political Agent by the Lt. Governor and Fakirmohan handed over responsibility for the office and Treasury to him, and left Anandapur with a heavy heart. The post of Manager fell unto the hands of Durgadas Mukhopadhyaya. Fakirmohan was relieved of his Keonjhar assignment in March L892.

1889	Attended the Indian National Congress Session held in Bombay as the representative of the National Society of Balasore.
1890	Attended the Indian National Congress Session held in Calcutta while he was working as Manager in Keonjhar estate.
July 1892	The second part (*Dusara Gasta*) of *Utkala Bhramanam* (Orissa Tour) was published.
May 1893-96 **DOMPADA** ***(second term)***	Fakirmohan joined as Manager of Dompada state on receipt of a telegram from the king of Dompada, Brajendra Kumar Mansinha Bhramarabara Raya for the second time. He was earlier the Dewan of Dompada for one year from Aug. 1876 to Aug. 1877. Almost after 16 years Fakirmohan made the second land settlement in Dampada which increased the land revenue of the state. He built a spacious bungalow for state guests opposite to the palace's Lions Gate and dug a well at the edge of the village on his own in the memory of his late wife.

	He started constructing a road from Nijgarh (head quarters) to Pathapur but could not complete it.
	The Queen (daughter of the Raja of Parikud), died of child birth.
Death of Krushnakumari	Fakirmohan's second wife Krushnakumari died of chronic indigestion on *Bhadra Sukla dasami* (Aug.-Sept. 1894). After Krushna Kumari's death Fakirmohan left his school-going son Mohinimohan and daughter Sarojini under the custody of Madhusudan Rao, Superintendent of the Normal School in Cuttack for a year.
1896-1905 *Residence in Cuttack*	Fakirmohan came back from Dompada to reside in Cuttack town. He had purchased a big bungalow at Buxi Bazar and had sold out half of it. The other half of the house was under his possession. (Finally he sold it out to Mr. Madhusudan Das in 1916.) He had purchased a new property at Bakharabad where he built his own house in 1896.
1897	Mohinimohan passed Entrance Examination in second division and received a scholarship.
	He engaged himself in the trade of timber and wooden goods by establishing a company 'Messers Senapati and Son.'
December 1898	He attended the Indian National Congress session held in Madras as a delegate of the National Society of Balasore.
	He also attended the Monotheist Convention in Madras as a delegate of the Balasòre Chapter of Brahmo Samaj.
	During his stay in Madras, he met Bal Gangadhar Tilak, and visited Kanchipuram and other places of importance.

October 1899-July 1900

Fakirmohan stayed in Kendrapara for nine months to set right the bankrupt zamindari of Lakshmi Narayan Jagdev whose grandfather, Gouri Shyama Narendra was a famous zamindar. Fakirmohan audited their revenue accounts and found that the zamindar brothers were in deep debt on account of their competitive extravagance which was beyond redemption. Fakirmohan had to leave that job. He came back to Cuttack.

He gave his daughter Sarojini in marriage to Gagan Bihari Choudhury of Balasore in 1898.

During Fakirmohan's stay in Dompada (1893-96) two anthologies of poems - *Puspamala* (1894) and *Upahara* (1895) were published.

During his stay at Cuttack he concentrated more on writing poems, short stories, novels and essays. He studied the *Upanishads* assiduously and commenced translating them into Oriya verse. (His first short story *Lachhamania* which was supposed to have been written in Balasore nearly thirty years back, has not been retrieved till date.) In Cuttack he serialised his first fiction *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* from 1897 to 1899. This novel was, however, published in book form in 1902. In 1898, his much acclaimed short story *Revati* was published. *Khila Harivamsa*, the *Vanaparva* and the *Virataparva* of the *Mahabharat*, translated into Oriya verse were published in 1902, 1904 and 1905 respectively while Fakirmohan was residing in his Cuttack residence. The *Upanishad Samgraha* was also published in 1905, the year when he left Cuttack for Balasore.

1902 His son Mohinimohan graduated in the second chance and took admission in M.A. (Philosophy) in Duff's College, Calcutta.

April 11-12, 1903

Fakirmohan attended the Ganjam Jatiya Sammilani held at Berhampur and from there he proceeded to visit Visakhapattanam and Waltier.

May 1903 The Utkal Sahitya Samaj was formed at Cuttack. Fakirmohan was nominated as Vice-President and Madhusudan Rao as President.

1903 Fakirmohan attended the first annual Conference of Utkal Sammilani held in Cuttack on December 30-31, 1903. His Cuttack residence was converted to a veritable guest house for the purpose of the Utkal Sammilani.

1904 Marriage of Fakirmohan's only son Mohinimohan with Hiranprabha, daughter of Rajanikant Ghosh as per the Brahmo custom in Cuttack.

Attended the second annual Conference of Utkal Sammilani held at Cuttack on December 28-29, 1904.

1905 Mohinimohan was appointed as Sub Deputy Collector at Balasore. Fakirmohan accompanied him to Balasore.

1905-1918 Fakirmohan spent the last thirteen years of his life at Balasore in his own residence near 'Shanti Kanan' (the Garden of Bliss or the Tranquility Grove). Close by his residence was the monument to his dead wife, Krushna Kumari which used to offer him silent companionship. In this serene and melancholic atmosphere ageing and diseased Fakirmohan composed the last works of his life which included fictions like *Mamu*, *Prayaschitta*, the long biographical poem *Bauddhavatara Kavya* and his *Atmajivana Charita*.

Home bound in Balasore

His Balasore-stay also witnessed publications of poetry anthologies, titled *Avasaravasare* (1908), *Pujaphula, Dhuli,* novels, eg *Mamu* (1913), *Lachhama* (1914) and *Prayaschitta* (1915) and novelets like *Punarmushikobhava, Randipua Ananta* and a collection of short stories, *Galpaswalpa* (1917).

1906 Fakirmohan attended the third annual Conference of Utkala Sammilani held on April 13-14, 1906 at Balasore.

1908 Attended the fifth annual Conference of Utkala Sammilani held at Puri on April 18-19, 1908.

He attended the sixth annual Conference of Utkala Sammilani held in Cuttack on December 30-31, 1908.

December 31, 1908

He presided over the 6th annual Conference of the Utkala Sahitya Samaj of which he was the regular Vice-President.

1909 Accepted membership of the district level committe of the Association for the Advancement of Scientific and Industrial Education.

1909 Fakirmohan drank undiluted sulphuric acid by mistake. He thought the medicated acid would cure his diarrhoea. But it had a paralysing effect on him. His daughter-in-law Hiranprava was with him during his illness.

April, 1912 He paid his homage to Kavivara Radhanath Ray on his 4th death anniversary organised at the Balasore Zilla School under the chairmanship of Samanta Radha Charan Das.

1913 He was nominated as the regular President, Utkala Sahitya Samaj and continued as such till death.

1913 He attended the 9th annual Conference of Utkala Sammilani held at Puri on December 28-29, 1913.

1914 Fakirmohan signed his Last Will and Testament on June 19, 1914.

His Sanskrit compilation of *Brahmananam Sandhyapaddhati* was published.

January 1915 Fakirmohan presided over the *Gorakshini Sabha* (for protection of cows), held at Balasore.

1915 Fakirmohan attended the 11th annual Conference of Utkala Samilani held at Sambalpur on December 27-28, 1915. He could not attend the 10th annual Conference which was held at Paralakhemundi.

1916 The Suratarangini Saraswata Samiti of Bamanda (Bamara) felicitated Fakirmohan and conferred on him the honorific 'Saraswati' on February 7, 1916.

He published *Samavaya Runa Samiti Prasanga* (about the Cooperative Credit Society) in a question - answer format.

His verse translation of *Chhandogya Upanishad* was published.

Saraswati Fakirmohan organised the 12th annual Conference of Utkal Sammilani held at Balasore on December 29-30, 1916.

February 1917 Utkalmani Pandit Gopabandhu Das gave company to Fakirmohan for two days at his Balasore residence.

March, 1917 He was conferred with a title "Kavishekhar" by the Mukti Mandap, Puri.

October 12, 1917

Fakirmohan gave away prizes to student-winners of Satyavadi Vana Vidyalaya and exhorted the students to value physical strength.

December 5, 1917

Fakirmohan was nominated as Chairman of the Memorandum Draft Committee of the Balasore National Society. The Memorandum was sent to the Secretary of State and Viceroy requesting the Government to amalgamatė all Oriya-speaking tracts and to accord permission for local manufacture of *punga* salt.

February 16, 1918

Fakirmohan presided over a meeting in Chanapur village near Balasore which felicitated Prafulla Chandra Patnaik (son of his intimate friend Gobinda Chandra Patnaik) for being awarded the Ray Saheeb title.

1918 Kavishekhar Saraswati Fakirmohan presided over the 13th annual Conference of Utkal Sammilani held at Idga field in Cuttack on March 30-31, 1918. He presented a written speech wherein he spoke about the unification of Orissa, availability of cloth, food and salt at a reasonable rate, development of mother-tongue and spread of women education. He complimented the publication of the English weekly '*The Oriya*', and government's announcement of induction of youths of Orissa in the army.

May 1918 Fakirmohan attended the marriage ceremony of the princess of Bada Khemundi. He visited Berhampur, Manjusha and Mahendragiri, and came back to Balasore on 28 May, 1918 by train.

June 14, 1918 Vyasakavi Saraswati Fakirmohan breathed his last at the age of seventy-six on 14 June, 1918, on the festive day of *raja sankranti,* Friday in Balasore at 10.12 a.m. He joined the illustrious galaxy of the dear-departed souls of Radhanath Ray,

The Curtain Falls

Madhusudan Rao, Raja Sachidananda Tribhuvan Dev of Bamanda, Maharaja Ramachandra Bhanjdeo, Raja Baikunthanath De, Rayabahadur Radhacharan and Rayabahadur Gourishankar Ray.

The Shanti Kanan still showcases the life-size statue of Vyasakavi Saraswati Fakirmohan, deftly built by Ananda Mishra, a famous artist of Orissa, during the closing years of Fakirmohan. It seems the architect of modern Orissa stunned everybody by writing, as it were, his own epitaph in advance before the bell tolled.

Sept, 1918 In a special Convention of Utkal Sammilani held in Cuttack on Sept. 21-22, 1918 under the chairmanship of Utkal Gourav Madhusudan Das, the sad demise of Fakirmohan was condoled :

"That this Conference deplores the irreparable loss Orissa has sustained by the death of Saraswati Fakirmohan Senapati, the President of the last session of the Conference."



FACT SHEET - II

SOCIO-POLITICAL SCENARIO OF ORISSA DURING FAKIRMOHAN'S TIMES

ORISSA BEFORE THE ADVENT OF FAKIRMOHAN

2.1 Orissa under the Afghans, Mughals and Marathas

With the death of Raja Mukunda Harichandan in 1568, Orissa became a prey to the Afghans and the Mughals. The two powerful invading forces fought to conquer Orissa.

In 1575, Orissa was divided into three *Sarkars*, viz., Cuttack, Jaleswar and Bhadrak. Cuttack remained under the Afghans whereas Jaleswar and Bhadrak remained under the Mughals.

In 1592 the Mughal General Mansingh annexed Cuttack to the Mughal Empire of Akbar. In 1607 Orissa was separated from Bengal and became a separate *Subah*. Hasim Khan became its first Governor. Murshid Quli Khan became the Nazim of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in 1713, after the death of Aurangzeb in 1707. He died in 1727. Sujauddin succeeded him. He died in 1739. One of his trusted advisors was Alivardi Khan who became Nazim. There was a battle between Alivardi and Murshid Quli Khan II, the Nawab of Orissa. Murshid was defeated and his trusted lieutenant Mir Habib sought help from Raghuji Bhonsla for invasion of Bengal. Raghuji sent his Prime Minister, Bhaskar Ram or Bhaskara Pandit who was treacherously murdered by Alivardi at Mankora on 31 March, 1744.

During Akbar's time, Orissa was divided into five *Sarkars* viz. Jaleswar, Bhadrak, Cuttack, Kalinga Dandapat and Rajmahendri. These *Sarkars* formed a part of the Bengal Subah. Subsequently, four political divisions emerged.

1. Mughal Subah or Mughalbandi comprising districts of Midnapur, Balasore, Cuttack and the coastal portion of the Puri district.
2. Major portions of Puri district including the kingdom of Khurda.
3. Southern Orissa under the Sultan of Golkonda.
4. The Garjat or small princely states.

The Chicacole Cirkar which included the Ganjam and Koraput tracts became a part of the Nizam Kingdom, and was governed from Hyderabad.

In 1751, Alivardi Khan, the Nawab of the Bengal Province ceded the territories of Orissa lying between the Suvarnarekha river in the north and Rishikulya in the south to the Marathas. The part of Orissa on the north of the river Suvarnarekha, i.e. the Midnapur district remained, however, under the control of Alivardi Khan.

Maratha Administration (1751-1803)

Mir Habib became the first Governor of Orissa when Orissa came under the Maratha rule. Mir Habib was succeeded by Mirza Saleh (1752-59), Sheo Bhatt Sathe (1760-64), Bhawani Pandit (1764-68), Shambhaji Ganesh (1768-70) and Sadashiv Rao (1793-1803) respectively.

During the Maratha rule, the Mughalbandi was divided into four *Chakla*-s or divisions, viz. Cuttack, Bhadrak, Soro and Balasore. Each *Chakla* was sub-divided into *Parganas* and each *Pargana* was further sub-divided into several *Mahals* or groups of villages. An officer designated as *Amil* was kept in charge of a group of *Parganas*.

The Garjats were held by several feudal chieftains on a hereditary tenure. They paid their *peskush* or tributes to Maratha government. The Marathas were more or less mercinaries. Their district military officers, known as *Faujdars* were stationed at Balasore, Jajpur and Cuttack. They were to assist the *Subahdars* or district Governors in their revenue administration.

Most of the chiefs in Orissa were irregular in payment of their tributes. The defeaulting zamindars often fled to avoid mercinary harassment.

The Maratha system of assessment of land was not harsh for the ryots, compared to that of the later British. Marathas allowed free service-lands to the *Paiks*. The Marathas never sold the estates of original proprietors to affluent outsiders for a higher bid, though it became a practice of the later British administrators in Orissa during their early phase of administration. The Marathas in Orissa strictly adhered to religion and never promoted distillery and opening of liquor shops.

2.2 Orissa under the British Administration (1803-1947)

The advent of British power in India dates back to 1757 A.D. The East India Company's aim was extension of the British Empire in India.

On 12 August 1765 Lord Clive got the *dewani* of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Clive's Orissa then only meant the single district of Midnapur. He then tried to take into possession the whole of Orissa from the Marathas but failed. The British occupied Ganjam in 1768. Ganjam became the northern most district of the Madras Province.

By the treaty of Deogaon concluded on 17 December, 1803, Raghuji Bhonsla ceded to the East India Company in perpetual sovereignty the Province of Cuttack, including the port and district of Balasore while Lord Wellesley was the Governor General. The British conquest of Orissa took one month from September 14, 1803 to October 14, 1803. Puri was occupied on September 18, Balasore on September 21, 1803 and Soro on October 3, 1803. The Barabati Fort at Cuttack was seized on October 14, 1803. The British annexation was not opposed by the people. The principal Maratha officers were all bribed by the British. Orissa was not new to the Britishers. The East India Company had already established factories at Hariharapur (modern Jagatsinghpur), Pipli (on the bank of the river Suvarnarekha) and at Balasore (on the bank of the river Budhabalanga) around 1635 A.D.

The Deogaon Treaty (1803) also made arrangements for twenty-nine tributary states. Thirteen states including Khurda were annexed to the Mughalbandi and were directly governed by the Company Government. The rest of the sixteen tributary states, viz. Nilgiri, Joromoo (or Daspalla), Narsinghpur, Angul, Talcher, Keonjhar, Khandapara, Ranpur, Hindol, Tigiria and Dhenkanal remained as subordinate allies. They enjoyed full freedom in their internal administration but they had to make regular remission of tributes to the Government.

Besides these 29 Garjat states, there were also 18 other Garjat states or Chhatisgarh states in western Orissa. In 1862, 14 out of eighteen states, viz. Patna, Bindra-Nawgarh, Khariar, Borasambar, Phuljhar, Sarangagarh, Sakti, Raigarh, Bargarh, Bamra, Redhakhol, Sonepur, Sambalpur and Chandrapur were placed under the Commissioners of Central Provinces. Gangapur and Bonai remained under Chhotnagpur Division whereas Boudh and Athmallik were kept under the Tributary Mahals of Cuttack. Thus, Orissa remained dismembered. The total area of British Orissa in the 19th century was 23907 sq miles of which 16,184 sq miles were occupied by the Tributary Mahals.

Major Broughton conquered Sambalpur in January 1804, but the Marhata rule was reimposed there in 1806. The Britsh took it over again in 1817 and resigned it to the administration of Chauhans from 1818 to 1849. Lord Dalhousie's Doctrine of Lapse forced Sambalpur to come under the direct administration of the British in December 1849. The British take-over of Sambalpur led to a political turmoil in which Veer Surendra Sai emerged as an indefatigable freedom fighter and died as a political prisoner in the Asirgarh jail.

As per the Regulation 12 of 1805 Mughalbandi Orissa was divided into two Divisions-Northern and Southern. Each Division was kept under a Judge-cum-Magistrate-cum-Collector. Robert Ker (who died in 1819) remained in charge of Northern Division whereas Charles Groeme remained incharge of the Southern.

The Regulation 5 of 1818 introduced a new office of the Commissioner in Cuttack. Robert Ker, the second Judge of the Court of Sadar Dewani Adalat and Nizamat Adalat became the first Commissioner in Cuttack. In 1814, office of the Superintendent of the Tributary Mahals was established by the order of the then Governor General Lord Moria. Edward Impey became the first Superintendent of the Tributary Mahals. Regulation 5 of 1818 authorised the Commissioner in Cuttack to act as the ex-officio Superintendent of the Tributary Mahals. On 23 October, 1828 the Mughalbandi tract or the Province of Cuttack was divided into three districts, i.e. Balasore, Cuttack and Puri. These three districts constituted the 'Province of Cuttack' or 'Zilla of Cuttack'. H. Rickett, W. Wilkinson and R.Hunter became Magistrate-cum-Collectors respectively. Orissa remained under the Presidency of Bengal. In 1829, Cuttack became the 19th Commissionership of Bengal Presidency comprising Puri, Cuttack, Khurda, Balasore, Midnapur, Nuagaon and Hijli. In 1853, a Lieutenant Governor remained in charge of the administration of the Bengal Presidency. By 1870, the total population of three districts and of the eighteen Tributary Mahals of Orissa was 3,280,547.

2.3 Land Settlement under the British

There was uneven revenue system in Orissa. Some landowners of the superior class and descendants of Hindu kings in the Mughalbandi or Rajwara used to pay quit rent or nominal rent.

Khandayat chiefs along the sea coast maintained *Garhas* or *Killas* also by paying quit rent and they were allowed to retain *Paiks* or peasant militia in lieu thereof. The section 35 of Regulation XII of 1805 also upheld the right of some zamindars to their ancestral estates on payment of *peshkush*, provided they continued their loyalty to the Company Government. The chiefs of Aul, Kujang and Kanika and others were among them. *Sanads* were also distributed to some estates of inferior rank like Darpani, Sukinda and Madhupur to ensure loyalty to the government. Many *Killajat* estates like Dompada, Chausathipada and Amboo did not enjoy the status of

permanently settled *mahals* for a long time. Dompada, however, became a permanently settled estate in 1829. There were 1636 zamindaris in Balasore district. One hundred and fifty out of them were covered under permanent settlement by 1868.

The British made a land settlement for one year in 1804 which was extended upto 1807. Till 1817, the land settlement underwent revision for six times. The settlement of 1830 remained in force for thirty years. From 1863 to 1870 the work of a revised settlement continued and in 1870 final land records were made public. This settlement was designed to remain in force for another thirty years.

The implementation of such unjudicious revenue system hit the zamindars and ryots hard. The British officials did not allow remissions when there were crop failures during natural calamities. The prospective revenue from the reclaimable and cultivable land was realised by force which was never a practice during the Maratha period. When the revenue was not paid on the scheduled dates, the estates were put to auction in Calcutta. In 1807, nearly 266 estates and between 1807 and 1816, more than a thousand estates were thus auctioned, and were grabbed by the rich Bengalis and *Amlas* and even by 'absolute strangers' who could pay the higher bid. Thus, moneylenders found the business highly lucrative. The agrarian profile including the role of petty zamindars leading to fiscal exploitation is abundantly portrayed in Fakirmohan's short stories and fictions.

2.4 Depreciation of Cowry Currencies

In 1811 the Company Government introduced copper and silver coins to replace the cowrie currency. Money-changers charged exorbitant exchange rate which partly paralysed the rural economy. The zamindars and chiefs also faced a lot of difficulties while remitting their quit rent, *peshkush* and tributes to the British treasury.

2.5 The British Monopoly of Salt Trade

The British Government took over the monopoly of salt manufacture and sale in 1804 and appointed a Salt Agent to

supervise. The British had already taken over the salt trade in Bengal from 1765. In 1765, Lord Clive formed an 'Exclusive Society' for inland trade in salt, betel nut and tobacco. The company government abolished the Society in 1772 and assumed full control over the trade. In 1780, Warren Hastings appointed civil officers as Salt Agents. The Marathas did not impose any ban on the salt trade in Orissa. The quality of Orissa's salt was comparatively higher. The British started monopolising the trade right from the Balasore quay in 1804 and restricted exportation of salt by land and the sea. Within ten years, their monopoly spread to the entire sea coast of Orissa. James King, the first Salt Agent in Orissa who had under his control nearly 100 miles of northern sea cost reported in 1907 that nearly one lakh and a half maunds of salt was transported to Bengal. In the following year, the production reached four lakh maunds.

The Northern Division contained eight '*aurangs*' (or salt manufacturing centres)— Bolang, Saratha, Dasmolang, Panchmolang, Ankura, Chudamani, Dhamra and Chardia. In 1823 there were three *golas* in the Division—Balasore, Soro and Bhadrak. In 1827, a new *gola* (or sale outlet) was established at Basta.

The East India Company started importing some processed salt from Liverpool since 1820. By 1832 the Company imported nearly two lakh maunds of salt from Liverpool. The salt traders in England demanded that the East India Company would manufacture salt but would not be allowed to sell in Bengal Presidency. However, in 1862-63, there were some relaxations. But indigenous salt manufacture could not compete with the Liverpool salt. It gradually declined and nearly 40,000 employees working in salt factories in Orissa were thrown out of job and quite a many perished during the 1865-66 Famine.

The flourishing salt trade in Balasore and its decline is well documented in Fakirmohan's *Autobiography* and in his feature-oriented story, *Baleswari Panga Luna* (1907).

2.6 Causes leading to Unrest

The temporary land settlement in the Mughalbandi and quasi-permanent settlement in the Garjat created a havoc. The Garjat chiefs went on exploiting the people. The zamindars in Mughalbandi did not take steps to increase land produce under the fear that they would be asked to pay more taxes in the next settlement. The imposition of Bengal Revenue Regulation dispossessed many Oriya Zamindars. The price of essential commodities became prohibitive. Common salt became scarce. Jagirdari system was abolished which deprived special categories of people like Dala Behera, Bishoi, Khandayat Paik, Naik, Karan, Chowkidars of their traditional right to tax-free land. The government introduced copper and silver coins replacing the cowrie currency, much to the inconvenience of the people. Clerks in British offices who were mostly non-Oriyas became corrupt and exploited the people. All these led to uprisings.

The **Paik rebellion** in 1817-18 epitomises the British misrule and maladministration in Orissa in its early phase. If Sepoy Mutiny, 1857 is the first fire of freedom struggle, the Paika Rebellion of 1817 is undoubtedly the first flicker.

2.7 The Great Famine

For the Great Famine in 1865-66, ascribable to gradual crop failure and natural calamities, though the British administration was mainly to be blamed. The Report of the Famine Commission of April 1867 blamed T.E. Ravenshaw (who joined as Commissioner in July 1865), the Board of Revenue and Sir Cecil Beadon, the Lt. Governor for lack of foresight. Fakirmohan has painted a vivid picture of this horrible Famine in his *Atmajeevan Charita*, which he himself witnessed at the age of twenty-four. The Famine took the toll of nearly one-fourth of Orissa's populace. The government record shows that 8905 people died of starvation and related diseases in Balasore town alone from June to October, 1866.

2.8 Educational Institutions

Oriya Pathashalas - There were many indigenous schools or *pathashalas* in Orissa where the *Avadhanas* or traditional Oriya teachers imparted elementary education to pupils. By 1856 there were 2074 *pathashalas* in Cuttack and 839 *pathashalas* in Balasore district.

The Role of Missionaries for Spread of Education - The Missionaries established a modern school in Cuttack in 1822 AD. They also took over the management of 15 local schools by the end of 1823. In October 1823, the Baptist Missionary Society of England established the Cuttack Charity School in Cuttack which came under the direct administration of the Government in February, 1841. Besides the English Baptist Misionary, the American Baptist Society spread their religion, and established schools in Sambalpur, Balasore and Jaleswar. The Roman Catholic Missionary became active both in Cuttack and Balasore. The Spanish and German Missionaries confined their activities within the southern Orissa.

The Missionaries also took steps toward the establishment of training schools, co-educational schools and vocational schools in Orissa. The missionaries played a singular role in the spread of modern education from 1822 to 1847. After 1847 and till 1873 they allied themselves with the Company Government. The Brahmo brothers also carried on educational reforms and established schools in Orissa from 1864 to 1898, and thereafter, the Hindu social reformists and intellectuals came to the forefront for the spread of modern education.

H.Ricketts, Commissioner took steps for establishment of Anglo-Vernacular schools. The first Anglo-Vernacular school was established in Puri in 1835, but it was closed in 1840 for lack of students.

When each district in Bengal had the benefit of a government school, there was only one school in entire Orissa, and that was the Cuttack School. In November 1853 government opened Zilla Schools in Puri and Balasore, which taught upto the entrance

standard from 1854. By 1854, there were three district schools, eight Lord Hardinge schools and three schools in Angul. By 1858-59 there were 22 government schools including 18 Vernacular Schools and 8 aided schools. In 1863 the government introduced vernacular scholarship and opened the normal classes in Cuttack. The Normal (Training) School was started in Cuttack in 1869. Two more Normal schools were opened, one each in Puri and Balasore. The Cuttack High School was made a College in 1875. This was renamed as Ravenshaw College in 1879.

The educational scenario got a new impetus after 1870. In 1873-74 schools in Orissa numbered around 905. In 1885 Vernacular Schools in Balasore numbered 2305 and in Cuttack 4736. By the close of the 19th century there were 6351 functional schools with a student enrolement of 108956.

2.9 Publication of Books / Text Books for Schools in Orissa

The Role of Missionary

1809 - The Oriya translation of *the Bible.*

1811 - Two parts of *the Old Testament*

1811 - *Oriya-English Dictionary* by Mohan Prasad Thakur (Oriya - English)

1831 - *Introductory Grammar of the Ooryah Language* by Sutton

1832 - *Easy Reading Lesson* (2nd Edn.) by Sutton

1832 - *Padartha Vidyasara* (Physics book)

1839 - *Bhugola* (Geography book) with maps

1840 - *Nitikatha* (Moral Lessons)
Dharmapustaka Sara (Essence of Religion)

1839 - *Itihasa* (History) *Pustak*

1841-43 - *Ooryah Grammar* (Oriya Dictionary in 3 volumes) by Rev. A. Sutton.

1841 - *Odiya Vyakarana* by Pandit Biswambhara Vidyabhusana

1844-45 - Sutton's *Introductory Lessons* or *Vakyavoli*
1845 - J. Philips - *Odiya Bhugola*
1845-46 - Sutton's *Vernacular Classbook O Odiya Primer*
1855 - *Odiya Vyakarana Sara* by W.C. Lacey
1856 - *Odiya Ganita* (Arithmetic book)
1858 - *Varnabodhaka* (Learning of the Alphabet)
1857-58 - The Cuttack Mission Press printed books in Oriya on Physics, Oriya Grammar, Orissa History, Moral Lessons etc. It also continued publishing text books in English with financial assistance from various Missionaries.
1866-70 - Some Oriya and domiciled Bengali intellectuals joined hands with the Missionaries in the preparation and publication of Oriya books. Some of the important books are listed below :

Bichhanda Patnaik - *Bhugola Sutra, Bodhodaya, Charupatha, Kadambari, Raghuvamsa, Sita Vanavasa,* and *Utkala Vyakarana*

Fakirmohan Senapati - *Jeevana Charita, Utkala Sarala Vyakarana, Ankamala* and *Bharata Varshara Itihasa.*

Pyarimohan Sen - *Shishupatha*

Gobinda Chandra Patnaik- *Upakramanika, Varna Bigyana, Vyakarana Kaumudi*

Mr Miller and Raghunath Mishra - *Varna Parichaya*

Jaganmohana Lal - *Bhrama bhanjana* (used as a text book which was modelled after Thomas Parnell's *Hermit*) 3rd Edn. 1885

Gaurishankar - *Bhugola Tattva*

Prabhakara Chudamani - *Padyamala, Upadesha Manjari*

Prabhakara Vidyaratna - *Padyasamgraha*

Dwarikanath Chakravartty - *Shikshabhidhana*

Kapileswara Vidyabhushana - *Sutradhara Vyakarna*

Between 1871 and 1888 five Oriya grammar books were published, which were independtly authored by Radhanath Ray, Harihara Rath, Udaynath De, Jagannath Rao and Pandit Prabhakar

Vidyaratna. Besides these books, W. Lacey and Nabin Chandra Sarangi jointly translated a few text books from Bengali to Oriya. The Government gave enormous financial assistance to the Calcutta Book Society (established in 1817) for publication of textbooks in Bengali whereas for publication of Oriya textbooks no enthusiasm was ever evinced. The use of Oriya language in the offices of the government had earlier evoked a mixed response. In 1837, it replaced Persian in the Public Offices. In 1842 and 1844 attempts were made to translate *Acts of Government* and *Police Regulation XX of 1817* into Oriya. Rev A Sutton's Oriya dictionary was patronised. The 'impolitic and injudicious' suggestion of the introduction of Hindusthani in the Public Offices in place of Oriya by Ricketts was turned down by the Orissa Commissioner, Mr. Gouldsbury in 1850. G.F. Cockburn, Commissioner (1853) encouraged Oriya. The Inspector of Schools, south-west Division commended the efforts of four Deputy Magistrates, and two Munsiffs for giving priority to Oriya language in the Public Offices.

2.10 Printing Press in Orissa (from 1837-1907)

1837	-	The Mission Press, Cuttack
1866	-	The Cuttack Printing Co. (Published Fakirmohan's *Puspamala, Avasaravasare*)
July, 1868	-	Balasore Utkala Press, Balasore, managed by Fakirmohan Senapati & Co. It was renamed as De's Utkala Press after the ownership was transferred.
1873	-	De's Utkala Press, Balasore (Published Fakirmohan's translation of the *Ramayana)*
1873	-	The Orissa Patriot or Utkala Hiteishini Press, Cuttack
Aug.1874	-	The Utkala Printing Co., Balasore (Published Fakirmohan's translation of the *Adiparva* and *Sabha parva* of the *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagavad Gita)* It was renamed as the Samanta Press in 1897.
1879	-	Mayurbhanj Press
1885	-	The Victoria Press, Cuttack (under Orissa Printing Corporation)

1885 - Sudhal Press, initially established at Cuttack and later shifted to Deogarh, Bamanda.
1889 - Anandapur Press, Keonjhar, set up by Fakirmohan on behalf of the Raja of Keonjhar.
1893 - Arunodaya Press (Published Fakirmohan's translation of the *Mahabharata-Vanaparva)*
1894 - The Ray Press (Managed by Radhanath Ray's kith and kin)
1897 - Samanta Press, Balasore
1899 - The Darpan Raj Press (Proprietor - Prince Hariharanath Pandit Bahadur)
1901 - Utkala Sahitya Press (Published Fakirmohan's *Chha Mana Atha Guntha, Mamu, Prayaschitta, Khila Harivamsa, Upanishad Sangraha* and *Galpa Swalpa)*
1906-07 - Mukura Press (Founder-Braja Sundar Das. It published Fakirmohan's *Punarmushikobhava, Dhuli, Randipua Ananta* and *Lachhama*)

2.11 Publication of Some Important Oriya / English Journals

1. 1849 - *Gyanaruna*, monthly - a Missionary publication
2. 1856 - *Prabodha Chandrika*, monthly - a Missionary publication, Editor-W.C. Lacey
3. 1861 - *Arunodaya* (Published by Christian Vernacular Literature Society)
4. Aug. 1866 - *Utkala Dipika* - (Editor - Gaurishankar Ray)
5. July 1868 - June 1871 - *Bodhadayini O Balesore Sambada Vahika* - Monthly

   July 1871 - Dec. 1877 - *Balesore Sambadavahika* - Fortnightly

   January 1878-1923 - *Balesore Sambadavahika* - Weekly
6. February 16, 1869 - *The Utkala Hiteishini* - Newspaper, (Editor-Kalipada Bandopadhyay)
7. February 22, 1869 - *The Cuttack Star* - Newspaper, (Editor - Kalipada Bandopadhyay)
8. November 1869 - *The Cuttack Standard*

There were as many as 51 magazines published between 1871 and 1899, of which the following deserve mention :

1. 1871 - *The Cuttack Chronicle*
2. 1873-85 - *The Utkala Darpana* (Manager - Baikunthanath De) This magazine for the first time hailed modern Oriya literatue and published Radhanath's translation of *Meghaduta* and prose essays. (During 1873-74 it was a monthly, but from 1875 it became a weekly newspaper)
3. 1873-74 - *The Utkala Putra* (Editor - Pearimohun Acharya)
4. 1877-85 - *The Dhumaketu* (Published irregularly)
5. 1878-80 - *The Utkala Madhupa* (Published by the Utkala Sabha)
6. 1885 - *Pradeepa* (Editor - Sharat Chandra Mukhopadhyaya)
7. 1887 - *Naba Sambada*
8. 1888 - *Odiya O Naba Sambada*
9. 1888-92 - *The Orissa Patriot*
10. May 1889 - March 1923 - *The Sambalpur Hiteishini* (First editor- Nilamani Vidyaratna)
11. 1891-96 - *The Utkala Prabha* (A monthly, published for two years regularly, then it became irregular)
12. Aug. 1893-97 - *The Indradhanu*
13. Sept. 1893-94 - *The.Bijuli*
14. January, 1897 - *The Utkala Sahitya* (Editor- Biswanath Kar. This magazine published Fakirmohan's major works right from its first issue)
15. June, 1899 - *The Ganjam Odiya Hitavadini*
16. April, 1906 - The *Mukura*
17. Nov., 1915 - The *Satyavadi*

2.12 Some Important Clubs/Societies in Orissa during Fakirmohan's Time

1. 1866 - The Utkalabhasha Unnati Vidhayini Sabha, Balasore, founded by Damodara Prasad Das.
2. 1867 - The Utkala Bhashoddipini Sabha, Cuttack (Secretary - Gourishankar Ray)
3. 1868 - The Cuttack Debating Club (In Dec. 1868, Dr Rajendra Lal Mitra in a debate on "Patriotism" disparaged Oriya language)
4. 1869 - The Cuttack Young Men's Association
5. 1872 - The Ganjam Utkala Hitavadini Sabha
6. 1874 - The Bhadrak Desha Hiteishini Sabha
7. June 1877 - The Utkala Sabha (patronised by Radhanath, Madhusudan and Pearimohun.)
8. June 1878 - The Balasore National Society (Fakirmohan remained involved with the activities of the Society from 1883 till death).
9. 1879 - The Balasore National Branch of Brahmo Samaj
10. 1881 - The Dhenkanal Hiteishini Sabha
11. 1882 - The Orissa Association or Utkala Sabha (Secretary - Gourishankar Ray)
12. 1883 - The Orissa People's Association (President - Dinanath Bandopadhyaya)
13. 1886 - The Utkala Sahitya Sammilani (President - Kalipada Bandopadhyaya)
14. 1889 - The Utkala Sammilani Sabha
15. March - 1893 - The Sanskruta Samiti, Balasore
16. December 1893 - Alochana Sabha (Its President and Secretary were Madhusudan Rao and Chandramohan Maharana respectively. Fakirmohan addressed the 1st anniversary).
17. June, 1995 - The Social Club, Balasore (Founder-Baikunthanath De)
18. April 1903 - Ganjam Jatiya Sammilani (attended by Fakirmohan)
19. May, 1903 - Utkala Sahitya Samaj, Cuttack. This *Samaj* owes its identity to the Alochana Sabha of Mr. Madhusudan Rao. Fakirmohan was its founder Vice-President.
20. Oct. 25, 1903 - Utkala Sammilani

2.13 Fakirmohan's Contemporary Celebrities

1. Bichitrananda Das (1828-1875)
2. Jaganmohan Ray (1831-1898)
3. Gobinda Chandra Patnaik (1833-Feb.-1893), became editor, the *Sambadavahika* after Fakirmohan relinquished editionship.
4. Kapileswar Vidyabhusan (b.1834)
5. Samanta Chandra Sekhar (b.1835-1904)
6. Gouri Shankar Ray (1838-1917)
7. Jaganmohan Lal (1838-1913)
8. Bichhanda Patnaik (b.1839)
9. Fakirmohan Senapati (1843-1918)
10. Nanda Kishore Das (b.1846-1894)
11. Madhusudan Das (1848-1934)
12. Radhanath Ray (1848-1908)
13. Pandit Gobinda Rath (1848-1918)
14. Basudev Sudhala Dev (1851-1903)
15. Pearimohun Acharya (1851-1881)
16. Baikunthanath Dey (1852 - Dec.1913)
17. Madhusudan Rao (1853-1912)
18. Ramashankar Ray (1858-1931)
19. Gangadhara Meher (1862-1924)
20. Biswanath Kar (1864-1934)
    (editor, the *Utkala Sahitya* from 1897 to 1934)
21. Shyama Sundara Rajguru (1866-1909)
22. Chandramohan Maharana (1867-1929)
23. Chintamani Mahanti (1867-1943)
24. Nilamani Vidyaratna (1867-1923)
25. Gopinatha Nandasharma (1869-1924)
26. Sachhidananda Tribhubana Dev (1872-1916)
27. Padmanav Narayana Dev (1872-1904)
28. Shashibhusan Ray (1874-1953)
29. Gopala Chandra Praharaj (1875-1945)
30. Kamapala Mishra (1875-1927)
31. Nanda Kishore Bal (1875-1928)
32. Gopabandhu Das (1877-1928)
33. Bhikari Charan Patnaik (1877-1962)
34. Braja Sundar Das (1880-1944)
35. Shashibhushan Rath (1881-1944)
36. Nilakantha Das (1884-1967)

2.14 The Language Agitation and Commandant Fakirmohan (1869-70)

The Great Famine crippled Orissa to a great extent. The British Government could realise their administrative lapses and tried to revamp their administrative machinery in Orissa under T.E. Ravenshaw, the Commissioner. But some of the Bengali intelligentsia in Balasore and Cuttack had been secretly preparing a blueprint to abolish Oriya language and clamp Bengali as the medium of instruction in schools, on the plea that there were only limited textbooks in Oriya and Orissa had no competent Oriya teachers. Most of the zamindars in Orissa were Bengalis. After the abolition of Persian language, Bengali and English were in use in law courts and Public Offices. In reality, there were many Oriya books already published by Missionaries, domiciled Bengali intellectuals and native Oriya scholars like Fakirmohan, Bichhanda Patnaik, Gourishankar Ray, Gobinda Chandra Patnaik and others. With the establishment of printing press both in Cuttack and Balasore, Oriya nationalism was on its wake. The only difference was that Bengal was half a century more advanced than Orissa because of the earlier British occupancy and dedicated philanthropists like David Hare in Bengal. The Calcutta Book Society and the Hindu College were established in Calcutta in 1817. A number of English schools were already in existence in Bengal. There were only 11 English Schools and 52 Vernacular Schools in entire Orissa in 1868-69. People's conservatism stood on the way of acquiring higher education. In 1868, Madhusudan Das passed F.A. from Calcutta and the next year Radhanath passed F.A. as a private candidate.

W.S. Atkinson, the Director of Education had submitted a proposal to the Bengal Government in 1860's to scrap Oriya as the second language which was then turned down by R.N. Shore, Commissioner of Orissa.

Mr Ravenshaw's proposal in 1868 to introduce Oriya in all schools of Orissa was approved by the Bengal Government on November 8, 1869. This announcement of Government order came

as a thunderbolt to a section of the Bengalis in Orissa. Kantichandra Bhattacharya, the Bengali teacher of Balasore District School initially bragged that he would master Oriya language, but was insufferably humiliated as he aped certain words in a hilarious manner. He had to rave, 'Oriya is not a separate language. It's merely a corruption of Bengali, and there is no need to study it." Sibachandra Som of Balasore, in his book *Udisyar Itihasa* (the History of Orissa, 1867) opined that Orissa's future progress could be attained through the acceptance of Bengali as the lingua franca.

The agitation was fanned when an eminent archaeologist, Rajendralal Mitra suggested in public, in a meeting held at the Cuttack Debating Club on December 9, 1868 that Bengali should replace Oriya in Orissa. He cooked up census statistics and the number of Oriya books published till then. It was a move to subvert the emerging Oriya nationalism, to defy the government order issued a month before (Nov. 8, 1869) and to facilitate the Bengali book-trade in Orissa. It brought loud cheers from some of the domiciled Bengalis, though prominent Bengali settlers in Orissa, viz. Shyamananda De, Golak Chandra Bose and Jaganmohan Roy challenged the derogatory statement of Rajendralal Mitra. The *Utkala Dipika* and the *Sambadavahika* voiced severe protest against the infelicitous remark of Dr Mitra, who was otherwise a scholar of repute.

Kalipada Bandopadhyay, residing in Cuttack, suddenly appeared as a champion of Bengali language. He brought out two newspapers—one in Oriya *Utkala Hiteishini* (Orissa Patriot) and the other, the *Cuttack Star* in English in February, 1869, just two months after Dr. Mitra's undervaluation of the Oriya language. Those two newspapers, in motivated malignity, propagated that Oriya language was the corrupt version of chaste Bengali. The Bengali Deputy Inspector for Schools, Uma Charan Haldar suggested in the *Cuttack Star* that Oriyas should learn to write Bengali in Oriya script. This suggestion brought cheers from some of the Bengalis in Cuttack including Rajkrishna Mukhopadhyaya when they met in the Cuttack Club in July, 1869.

The Indian Mirror in its September 17, 1869 issue reported from Calcutta that Oriyas also were not in favour of the replacement of Bengali by Oriya in schools, and they criticised the government order of November 8, 1869. It was later detected that the above-mentioned reporting in *The Indian Mirror* was based on a contrived signature campaign.

The *Utkala Hiteishini* of Mr Haldar went to the extent of brain-washing Oriya readers that Orissa's progress achieved so far, was only the gift of Bengal. It made a preposterous argument that Saraladasa of Orissa was influenced by Sri Chaitanya of Bengal.

These developments emboldened Kantichandra Bhattacharya to release a pamphlet, *Uriya Swatantra Bhasha Naye* in February 1870. The book was eventually dedicated to the famous archaeologist, Rajendralal Mitra, the conspicuous adversary of Oriya language. That libelous brochure of Kanti Chandra also carried Dr Mitra's endorsement. The headmaster of the Balasore Zilla School forwarded a copy of this book alongwith a favourable report to the European Inspector for Schools, through Sibadas Bhattacharya, Deputy Inspector for Schools in Balasore. The Bengali enthusiasts who were lured away by Kantichandra's trumpeted scholarship and Bengali patriotism became professedly jubilant.

At this crucial juncture, when our mothertongue Oriya was going to be sent into exile, Fakirmohan, the Commander of the new expedition, suddenly sprang into action, and took up his pen. His pen wrote poignantly :

"xxxx A sense of embattled rivalry had in any case prevailed in Orissa between Bengalis and Oriyas. Now one party was jubilant with impending victory, whilst the other sat silent and dispirited. The boisterous derision of our enemies seared our flesh like branding irons. We were thunderstruck, unable to believe our ears. Was it no longer possible to study our mother-tongue ?" (Trans. John Boulton).

Fakirmohan and his lieutenants of the crusade addressed a small congregation of clerks and natives in Balasore in the following manner :

"Gentlemen. It was not the Government's decision that Bengali should be taught in the schools in place of Oriya. It was a Bengali plot. They tricked the European Inspector. They will get Oriya abolished in the Kacheri next. Don't you see ? The Bengalis hold all the top jobs. xxx When Oriya is abolished, all the sons, brothers and in-laws of these Bengalis will become clerks. Mark my words, you'll all be dismissed, and in future your sons and grandsons will no longer be able to get Government jobs."

Courtesy : John Boulton, trans. *My Times And I : Atma-Jivana-Carita of Phakirmohana Senapati,* pp.138-39.

Fakirmohan pioneered a signature campaign. A public petition from Balasore was sent to T.E. Ravenshaw through the Collector of Balasore, John Beames who personally knew Fakirmohan, and had admired the latter's expertise in Oriya language and grammar.

John Beames (1837-1902) was Collector and Magistrate of Balasore from 1869 to 1873. Thereafter, he became Collector of Cuttack, and subsequently acted as Acting Commissioner till he left for Chittagong as Commissioner and Judge in 1878. He was an eminent philologist, and had proficiency in the north-Indian languages including Marathi and Gujarati. Before he came to Balasore, he had to his credit a scholarly book, *Outlines of Indian Philology (1867),* and in Balasore he resumed his research on his forthcoming dissertation, *A Comparative Grammar of Modern Aryan Languages of India.* In this context, Beames was introduced to the 'Patriotic Scholar', Fakirmohan by Rev. E.C.B. Hallam in 1869. A year after, in 1870 the language crisis had stirred up in Balasore.

John Beames took up Kantichandra's book, as it had received Rajendralal's acclaim. His immediate reaction was that the pamphlet was 'destitute of philological argument.' He presented a paper 'On the Relation of the Uriya to the Other Modern Aryan Languages' before the Asiatic Society of Bengal on April 6, 1870. In his discourse, he established Oriya as a separate language and 'a perfectly self-contained and independent member of the Indo-Aryan language family.'

John Beames' views on Kantichandra's book seemed sanguine when Bhudev Mukhopadhyaya's review appeared in *Education Gazette*, published from Calcutta.

The Final Victory

Thus, the battle waged by a few Bengali aspirants for linguistic hegemony over Oriya language ended in a fiasco. The Bengali Deputy Inspector for Schools in Balasore was transferred and Radhanath Ray was appointed in his place. Bengali was abolished from all schools in Orissa for good by a special order of the Government, and urgent steps were initiated to open more schools for diffusion of Oriya language. People realised that Fakirmohan the '*beta* ring-leader' was a real leader of the masses who could foil such a machination leading to a disastrous language-shock, hardly four years after the most severe shock of the Great Famine.



FACT SHEET III

FAKIRMOHAN'S CONTRIBUTION TO ORIYA READERSHIP

3.1 Fakirmohan's Emergence as Textbook writer

Young Fakirmohan passed the Middle Vernacular privately in 1861. He had served as a teacher at the Barabati School, Balasore for six years. After passing the Middle Vernacular, he chose to be a teacher again. He became Headmaster of the Balasore Mission School for eight years with a short intermission. The paucity of Oriya textbooks bewildered him. He shared his feelings with his junior compatriots, Radhanath Ray and Madhusudan Rao, and also interacted with other like-minded intellectuals. There were, no doubt, a few textbooks authored by government officials, British and Bengali literati and by some Oriya enthusiasts. But they were not adequate.

***Jeevana Charita* 1866**

At the age of twenty-three Fakirmohan first brought out a translated work, *Jeevana Charita,* originally written in Bengali by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar. This book contains biographies of scientists and scholars viz., Nicholas Copernicus, Galileo, Sir Frederic William Herschel, Sir Isaac Newton, Zimire Dubal, Grotius, Carl Linnaeus and Thomas Jenkins and Sir William Jones. This book was printed at the Baptist Mission Press, Calcutta in 1866. The name of Fakirmohan was spelt on the printed book as 'Phukeer Mohun Senaputy.' Babu Jayakrushna Mohapatra corrected the proof - copy. But it could

not become foolproof. Fakirmohan had to mention in the Preface that the book, *Jeevana Charita* was not the exact translation of the Bengali book, though he felt that the translation was becoming easier for him by substituting appropriate verbs in Oriya, and that, according to him, was the primary difference between the two languages. This unwitty and inadvertent comment of Fakirmohan unnecessarily entangled him when a few educated Bengali elite in Orissa conspired a moot point that Oriya was a dialect of Bengali language.

***Utkala Saral Vyakarana* 1866**

Teacher Fakirmohan's next textbook, *Utkala Saral Vyakarana* (Simple Grammar in Oriya) was also published the same year. It was printed at the Baptist Mission Press, Calcutta. The book is a grammar-primer for beginners of Oriya language and vocabulary. It has twenty-two small sections which analyse Vocabulary, Word-joinings or Conjunctions, Change of '*na*' and '*sa*' into ´*ṇa* and *ṣa*, Declensions, Words, Nouns, Adjectives, Gender, Number, Cases, Pronouns, Indeclinables, Nominal Suffixes, Verbs, Tense and Compounds etc.

***Ankamala* 1867 - 68**

Fakirmohan's third venture in the direction of writing textbooks was a book on arithmetic, *Ankamala* which was printed at Balasore Utkala Press. The book was well received. Its second edition also came out in 1870.

***Bharata Varshara Itihasa* 1869 and 1870**

Fakirmohan's fourth venture was the production of *Bharata Varshara Itihasa*. Its printed English title was *History of India in Ootkul.* The book contained roughly 240 pages, in two parts. The Part-I published in 1869, was dedicated to E.C.B. Hallam, Secretary, Balasore Mission School. The Part-II was published in 1870.

The Book presents India in the Vedic period, and it chronicles historical events leading to the martyrdom of Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi and the governance of Lord Canning.

This history book is the outcome of Fakirmohan's pains-taking endeavour over a period of three years. It was printed at Balasore Utkala Press and was selected as a textbook for scholarship examination. The Part-I was reprinted in 1876 and the part-II in 1890.

3.2 Fakirmohan As Translator of Epics

There was a period of lull about a decade in writing any more books. Fakirmohan's first wife died in 1872, and he was pursuaded to marry Krushna Kumari, the same year. A new chapter in his life suddenly opened up when he was appointed to the post of Dewan in Nilgiri feudatory state. Three and a half years after, he was appointed to the post of Dewan in Dompada estate where he stayed for a year. His third administrative posting was in Dhenkanal as Assistant Manager from August 1877 to February 1883. His Dhenkanal-posting brought about his personal tragedy when his son Manomohan by Krushna Kumari died in infancy, and it made his wife disconsolate. Often tragic experiences in life become a spring-board that ushers in a new phase, a new dimension in life. It so happened with Fakirmohan who was ready to emerge as a translator of epics and metaphysical treatises. Quite unconsciously, he was grooming himself as the *Vyasa* of Oriya language and literature.

Oriya verse translation of the *Ramayana* from 1880-86

Fakirmohan started translating the Sanskrit *Ramayana* of Maharshi Valmiki into Oriya verse. The manuscript was religiously read out daily to his grief-stricken wife. A year after his son's death, the translation of the *Adikanda* of the *Ramayana* was published which the administrator-cum-poet distributed to avid readers. The Cuttack Printing Co. printed the *Adi kanda* or *Bala kanda* in 1880 comprising 80 chapters. Fakirmohan was grateful to Bhaktakavi Madhusudan Rao, the then second teacher in Cuttack Collegiate School, for correcting the manuscript. Fakirmohan dedicated his first translation of the *Ramayana* to John Beames Esq. B.C.S., his benefactor and a friend of Orissa, as a token of gratitude.

Translation of the *Mahabharata* 1885 - 1887

Next year in 1881, the translation of the *Ayodhya Kanda* was published. There was a break in the publication of the rest of the translations of the *Ramayan* as he transferred the copy right. In 1883 the *Aranya Kanda*, in 1885 the *Kiskindhya Kanda* and in September 1886 the *Sundara Kanda* were published.

***The Bhagavad Gita* 1887**

The translation of the *Adi parva* and the *Sabha Parva* were published in 1886 and in 1887 respectively. The *Bhagavad Gita* was published in 1887. All the three books were printed at the Utkal Printing Co., Balasore.

Rest of the two cantos of the *Ramayan* in 1890 & 1895

Rest of the two cantos of the *Ramayana*, viz. the *Lanka Kanda* and the *Uttara Kanda* were published in 1890 and 1895 respectively.

Khila Harivamsa was printed at Utkala Sahitya Press in 1902.

3.3 The flowering of Fakirmohan's poetic genius

Fakirmohan became Manager in the feudatory state of Keonjhar from December, 1887 to March, 1892. He had a hectic period there. The Bhuiyans rebelled against the Raja. The government was not favourably disposed towards the Raja, as he was proved to be incompetent, tactless, and one of more exacting type. The Assistant Advisor ill-advised the Raja. Fakirmohan could not enjoy the confidence of the Raja. Virtually, he was on the cross-road. His loyalty to the Raja and to the British authority as well could not be evenly balanced. He could manage to diffuse a great threat to the life and honour of the royal family by his expedient statesmanship at a heavy price though. He had to remain a captive for more than a week by the rebel chief. Shrewd counsels of the Raja and local leaders conspired to malign him.

By 1892, Fakirmohan had gathered the administrative experience of serving five feudatory states for more than two decades. He had appeared twice on the national scene. He had the benefit of familiarising himself with most of the chiefs of the Garjat, high level British officials in the Moghulbandi, domiciled Bengali elite, promising Oriya litterateurs, guardians of religion, the frivolous zamindars, usurers and the exploited peasantry.

3.4 The First Poetic Adventure : *Utkala Bhramanam* 1892

After attending the Lieutenant Governor's official meeting at Bhadrak in February, 1892, while Fakirmohan was returning on elephant back to his Anandapur official headquarters, a queer idea struck him to make a roll call of honour. The poet in him woke up in a flash. He was now ready to compose

a verse satire on the contemporary celebrities of Orissa with their inherent strength and weaknesses while reminiscing Orissa's heritage and Nature's endowment to her. This literary masterpiece was about his imaginary tour to the far-flung parts of Orissa. The journey was never physically made. The landscape was his mind's creation through a retrieval of many images from the vaults of his memory. His sharp observation of and deeper insight into the characters, institutions and objects versified, is no doubt a unique venture in Oriya literature. By the time he reached Anandapur, his designed literary artifact was half gone through which he named, *Utkala Bhramanam*. The poet was fanciful. He did not subscribe his authorship to his own work and instead, he superscribed it in the following fashion :

'The book is authored by 'a son of Utkala, printed in a printing press though'(trans. by the author). As such, readers of Orissa could not be definite about the authorship of *Utkala Bhramanam* for a long time. The fourth edition of this book was published in 1925, seven years after the death of Fakirmohan. Prof. Natabara Samantaray, an eminent scholar, took pains in 1957 to scan Fakirmohan's *Utkala Bharamanam*. Prof. Samantaray regretted that he had not seen the first edition. He had to depend on the available second edition (published in 1899), the third (published in 1916) and the fourth edition (1925), and noticed that all those editions were dissimilar to some extent. The first edition contained 932 lines, the second edition contained 972 lines, the third 1264 lines and the fourth one contained 1158 lines.

***Pahila Gasta* or the First Tour of *Utkala Bhramanam* February, 1892**

The following discussion is based on the first edition of *Utkala Bhramanam*, printed at Anandapur Press in 1892 (courtesy - Prof. Debendra Kumar Dash).

The book has two sections - *Pahila Gasta* (the first tour) and *Dosara Gasta* (or the second tour). Both the *gasta*-s were published in 1892. This verse satire begins with "the description of Orissa's past grandeur, but the poet is shocked to find that the south of Orissa is forcibly occupied by the *Kamas* (i.e. Andhra), the northern part of Orissa is the homestead of Bengalis whereas the western part belongs to the Marathas. Trading communities like Marwaris, Kapudias, Bhojpuris and Gujratis are now controlling Orissa's economy. All lawyers and judges are non-Oriyas. The forthcoming land settlement holds out a bugbear to the zamindars."

The writer praises the young Maharaja Ramachandra Bhanj Deo (1871-1912) of Mayurbhanj. He fondly hopes that Ramachandra Bhanj will be equated with the second Vikramaditya. He also praises Raja Baikunthanath Dey and praises the two brothers, Rajaram and Ganganarayan for establishing a *Sadavartta Math*. The author records his appreciation for Gobinda Chandra Patnaik, the editor of the *Sambadavahika*.

To the poet, the village Soro is verily 'a mine of emeralds' - a proud village that produced the luminaries like Arttatrana Nanda and Sadasiba Nanda and Radhanatha'.

The poet on a travelling spree goes to Jajpur. There he becomes melancholic, and searches in vain, the old lady Parvati Ma who was adept in betel-making. Her processed tobacco was unique, and 'she was only comparable to either Galileo or Newton.'

He praises Radhashyam Narendra who was a noted extravagant zamindar, and was famed for his lavish hospitality.

While in Cuttack, he praises Mr. Ravenshaw for his manifold contributions, particularly in establishing the Girls' School, a General Hospital, Chandabali Port, the High level Canal, the Normal School, the Survey School and finally the Ravenshaw College. His praises are also due to John Beames, Mr Toynbee, Gourishankar, Ramshankar, Jaganmohan Lal, Madhusudan Rao, Pearimohun Acharya, Pyarimohan Sen (Deputy Inspector), Bijay Chandra Majumdar, Sadhu Charan Ray, Ramachandra Birabara, the chief of Talcher, Raja Sudhala Dev of Bamanda, Nilamani Vidyaratna, Upendra Bhanj, Bhaktakavi Dinakrushna, Jagannath Das, Kavi Abhimanyu, Kavisurya Brahma and Haridasa. The concluding six eminent poets, of course, belonged to the past.

***Dosara Gasta* or the second tour of *Utkala Bhramanam* July 1892**

The second tour was composed in July 1892 whereas the first one was composed in February 1892. The *Dosara Gasta* opens with the poet's craving for Devi Sarala's blessings in a humorous vein. The mental tour of the author commences from Lakshmananath, the main porch of Orissa. He goes on praising Faka Babu (Radha Charan Das) of Balasore and zamindar Harendranath Ray who established a High School at Lakshmananath. His praises are also due to Dwarikanath Chakravartty, a domiciled Bengali who shows interest in Oriya language. He praises eminent lawyers like Hariballabha Ghosh and Bipin Bihari and poets like Damodara Patnaik, Sudam Charan Nayak and Gopala Ballabha Das and the *kaviraj* Gadei Tihadi

(Gadadhara Tripathy). Sitanath Ray, the writer is encouraged by the poet to produce more literary work.

Fakirmohan does not hesitate to lash out against the so-called educated *babus* who show much hatred towards their mothertongue, and who imitate the West blindly. He exhorts them :

'Please serve your country and improve your mothertongue. Make efforts to thwart national calamity. 'Dear babus, I am making the request excess / Do not file against me a defamation case.'(trans. by the author)

He requests Durgadas Mukhopadhyaya (who succeeded Fakirmohan as the Manager of Keonjhar) not to resort to activities which would affect the poor. He wishes that the young Raja of Dompada would try to protect the honour of his state.

He desires to go to the Khandapada Palace, but at Kantilo, he revises his plan. Anyway, he pays his homage to Pathani Samanta who is enthroned on the seat of wisdom. It may be mentioned here that Fakirmohan's praise for Pathani Samanta, the astro-physicist of Orissa predated Radhanath's *Daravara Kavya* (1894).

Then the traveller chalks out his plan to go in the western direction. He skips his visit to Daspalla. He remembers Ladukeshwar's (the Raja of Nayagarh's) charity and magnanimity. He praises Mahendra Dev, the Raja of Boudh and Nruparaj, Raja of Barapali. He refrains from going to Athagarh.

The poet becomes extremely careful in putting Puri on his itinerary. He devises a novel literary strategy. He reads out from a 'Confidential Letter' (*Gupta Bhasha*) sent to him, on his request, by an

anonymous friend from Kundheibenta Sahi of Puri town. The letter is dated the 17th solar day of *makara masa* which may approximately correspond to the 30th of January. The writer's unwillingness to visit Puri is due to his fear of priests and servitors in the Puri temple. Since this is a very sensitive issue, the author dares not report directly, but takes the help of a pseudo-reporter.

While reprimanding and ridiculing priests and brahmins in Puri on the Mukti Mandap, the pseudo-reporter admits how he has been swindled in the Vimala temple. The reporter also praises an assembly of devotees, sincerely committed to the singing of divine songs including Jayadeva's *Gitagovinda* and the *Vishnusahasra Nama*. His derogatory remark on the Mukti Mandap as the 'sin-incarnate',is carefully made out. It was earlier the seat of learned brahmins. Orissa still remembers those learned and erudite scholars like Chanda Rajaguru, Lokanath Brahma, Mrutyunjaya Mishra, Gopinath, Kamadeva, Jagabandhu Mahapatra, Kavichandra Dinabandhu Mishra, Mrutyunjaya Tarkapanchanana, Raghu Mishra and Vinayaka Mishra.

The poet briefly focuses a few *maths* in Puri. They are : Mangu *Math*, Emara *Math* (then managed by Mahanta Raghunandan), the Dakshinaparshwa *Math*, the Siddha Mahapitha of Galava Rushi, the Ramadasa *Math*, and the Uttaraparshwa *Math*. He severely criticises a *mahant*, named Hayagribadasa. He also refers to the Raghavadasa *Math*, Odiya *Math* and Shankaracharya *Math*. The reporter mentions that most of the *Maths* in Puri are embroiled in litigations. He praises the Shankaracharya *Math*, run by Damodara Tirtha Dandi Swami.

The pseudo-reporter in his private communique praises Mana Khuntia and Gopala Pratihari who dug wells and ponds for the benefit of Puri residents.

The concluding portion of the 'Confidential Letter' tries to draw the poet's attention to the Raja of Parikuda 'who is famed for his charity and hospitality. The Raja gives free medicines to the needy. Orissa needs such personalities for her future development'.

The book ends with an endorsement by Shree Gopala Chudamani Tarka Panchanana who is presumably no other than Fakirmohan himself.

Utkala Bhramanam is a unique literary satire, and an important historical document. It opens a window to the 19th century socio-cultural and political profile of Orissa. Fakirmohan omitted some characters and incorporated many new personalities in the second and third editions of his *Utkala Bhramanam.*

Prior to Fakirmohan's *Utkala Bhramanam*, Gobinda Rath (1848-1918), it appears, wrote in similar vein his *Lat Darshana, Mahamela Darshana* (1884) and *Kataka Nagara Darshana* (1885). His works are rather matter-of-fact and prosaic, and lack Fakirmohan's creative fancy and genial humour.

3.5 Fakirmohan, the Poet

Fakirmohan had the sweet sensations of poetic impulse at twenty-one, when he was serving in the Balasore Mission School as Headmaster in 1864. His inspiration, it seems, was a short-lived one as he had many diversions. His first marriage that lasted for about sixteen years was never congenial. His assignments in different princely states from 1872 to 1896 kept him terribly preoccupied. His first

recorded poem, *Vijayadashami Uttaru* was published on Nov. 1, 1972 and the last poem, *Bada Sana* (Big and Small) was published in *Mukura* in May-June, 1917, about a year before his death.

Prarthana 1893

The death of his son, Manomohan by his second wife Krushnakumari did actually resurrect his art of versification. He concentrated first on translating epics and religious treatises like the *Gita* and *Khila Harivamsa*, primarily for his inconsolable wife as mentioned earlier. These verse-translations were followed by a farcical travelogue, *Utkala Bhramanam* written in mock-epic style in 1892. In 1893, a long musical-piece, *Prarthana* (Supplication) was published running about some twelve pages. He besought the Divine blessings in that long poem. *Prarthana* had first appeared in *Utkala Prabha* in 1893 and in the book form the same year. The 3rd edition was published in 1909, and the Samanta Press, Balasore brought out its 4th edition in 1912. Fakirmohan was very much alive then.

Puspamala 1894

Fakirmohan's first anthology of poems, *Puspamala* (The Garland) was published in 1894. It was printed at the Cuttack Printing Company. In 1894, his second wife, Krushnakumari, the centre of his poetic inspiration, died, leaving him almost despondent. Krushnakumari was survived by two small kids. The tragic shock permeated through Fakirmohan's poetic self with such pervasiveness that he started pouring out all his aching sensations, in-dwelling experiences and loving memories in a bare and unadorned manner without allusions and condensed phrasing. Many poems in his subsequent three anthologies were tuneful, euphonious and metrical. Some of his poems showed a cosmopolitan aura about them.

Upahara 1895

Fakirmohan's second poetical work after *Puspamala* was *Upahara* (Presentation), an anthology of nearly thirty-five poems. It was printed at Ray Press, Cuttack in 1895. It may be mentioned here that just before the release of his first collection of poems, *Puspamala* in 1894, his wife had died. Fakirmohan had added a brief yet soulful dedicatory homage in prose in memory of his wife in *Puspamala*. The second anthology *Upahara* contained four poems, eg *Puni ki dekhibi sehi sahasya vadana* (Shall I see that smiling face again ?), *Hasi hasi gala mote kandai kandai* (She parted with smiles, leaving me in desolate tears), *Mo Kshudra Tara* (My Little Star) and *Upahara* (Present) exclusively in memory of his departed wife. The last-mentioned poem was actually the concluding poem of the *Upahara* collection that lent the title to the anthology. This poem expresses the poet's passionate desire to present a garland to his departed wife who greatly rejoiced at various flowers that bloomed in their garden. But, '*Lo and behold! Thousands of oceans intervene now between you and me / How shall I present a garland to thee* ?' (trans. by the author). Mayadhar Mansinha has translated the first few lines of this dedicatory piece in his work, *Fakirmohan Senapati* under 'Makers of Indian Literature' series, published by Sahitya Akademi in 1976 as follows :

Beautiful Krushna Kumari,
the queen of my poor cottage,
My eternal sweet-heart, dear as life,
And my constant companion, the apple of my eyes,
See, how all your excellent virtues
Have got intermingled in my very blood streams,
with your departure.

Have'nt known a more virtuous woman in life,
Or a wife, more fully dedicated than yourself
To her husband,
And the loveliness of the full moon
In the blue heavens,
Or of the pearls of dew
On full-blown roses and lotuses,
Pale into banality, against your tears
That flowed from your eyes,
While in communion with the divine.

x x x x x

I feel now, as though, that it is the beauteous peace
Of your face,
That is now spread over the whole firmament.

x x x x x

At night, when the world was quiet,
And just we two
Sat on the terrace of our house
Or in the garden,
And observed the moon and the stars
Float slowly up above in the sky,
Shedding heavenly light all around,
I did feel, darling, - didn't I - in those quiet moments, that,
We too, were twin stars,
Like those up in the sky.

After staying in Cuttack for about a decade, Fakirmohan finally decided to reside in his Balasore residence, Shanti Kanan from 1905. He thought he would retire from public life, take rest and relax, though his pen was moving restlessly.

***Avasaravasare* 1908**

In 1908, Fakirmohan's third anthology of poems, *Avasaravasare*, containing 189 poems was published. It was printed at the Cuttack Printing Co, and its second edition was published in 1914. In the Preface to this anthology the poet made an humble confession – '*For me writing poems or reading books is to gain peace and patience, particularly when my mind becomes upset on account of painful suffering or at the time of tribulation. Whatever I see and perceive and whatever feelings surge up within my mind, I paint them in poetry.*'(trans by the author)

The poet appears to be nostalgic in some poems. He reflects on his grandmother, Kuchila Dei; the death of his son, Manomohan and his native village Mallikashapur. He records his estimation for Maharaja Krushna Singh of Dharakot, Padmanav Narayan, Bhaktakavi Madhusudan Rao, Utkal Gaurav Madhusudan, Damodar Patnaik, Nilamani Vidyaratna and Baikunthanath De.

His poem on "Poets' Assets" (*Kavira sampatti*), though written in the traditional metre of *pahadia kedara* camouflages a modern poetic piece.

Look ye poet, natural scenes :

The azure Sky, the pond full of lotuses
The full-moon, floral splendour and bees
The water-lilies, a pair of doves
Kingdoms fraught with wars
Violations of treaties, diplomacies
The brightness of stars, the beauty of cosmos
Dense forests, hermitages and woods
Pairs of youths, couples of birds
Morning and evening, the night jasmines

Freshness of youth, tryst, heroic struggle
Sulking emotions, the song of love
Estrangement and pain unbearable
Tearful eyes, the throbbing heart, rendezvous
The notes of Cuckoo, the moon-faced darling
The vernal breeze and the music enow
The fretful heart, pangs of love and life blest
The night, slumber and dream fetching love's missives
The converse between the lad and the lass
Devotion to God, the arbour, sweet notes of the flute
The Spring season, the expiry of Summer
Day and night – are all Thy Treasure.

(trans. by the author)

This poem has a striking resemblance with the Puritan poet Richard Steere whose poem, "Earth's Felicities, Heaven's Allowances" enumerates earth's natural treasures, abounding objects of delight, the darling brightness of the Sun, Moon and stars, the sweet, pleasant music and harmonious sounds, histories and novals and amorous converse etc – 'that give a charming sweetness to the Muse.' (Quoted in *Utkala Dipika* on June 22, 1918)

His love poems mark a departure from the preceding poetic tradition of ornate writing. He shares with his contemporary Radhanath Ray in metaphysical contents of his love poems but not in the celebration of amorous love, or flesh. His poems of folk life and the animal world, somehow, have become a recurrent theme in Nandakishore's. Fakirmohan paints the ennobling impact of conjugal love like that of the Victorian poets Robert Browning and Matthew Arnold. His love for his wife was the outcome of '*My meditation*'. She was to the poet : '*the autumnal moon, shining in the sky of my*

heart' and she was '*the death-winning and woe-dispellant song*' (trans. by the author). Though not a symbolist, Fakirmohan has termed the vast emptiness of the sky as Time or Eternity, the dark clouds as Premature Death and the rainbow as a self-conceited Rogue.

Besides the above-mentioned anthologies of poems, eg *Puspamala, Upahara* and *Avasaravasare*, two more anthologies, *Pujaphula* (Flowers for Worship) and *Dhuli* (Dust) were published in 1912. A supplement containing nearly 50 poems also followed the anthologies. *Pujaphula*, containing 26 poems and *Dhuli* containing 33 poems were printed at Utkala Press, Calcutta and Mukura Press, Cuttack respectively in 1912. Utkal Gaurav Madhusudan Das published a condolence-message in *The Oriya* wherein he mentioned about Fakirmohan's poetry as follows - '*His poetry is the outpuring of his heart, which cared not to imitate the heavy style of his contemporaries. It is the singing of a bird - the music of the piano fingered by nature herself. It is the music of a stream on its way to join the immense ocean.*'

Fakirmohan's poems are unambiguous and are meant for transparent communication. His poetic themes vary from the personal to cosmopolitan. He praises Japan's glories and achievements, and hopes his countrymen would rise to a new awakening. His lyrics and ballads are all set to music. His long poem on "Lucretia", the faithful Roman wife and on Mark Antony's fiancee "Cleopatra", "Tara Bai", "Josephine" and "Veni Samhara" are structured in a novel poetic form of ballad. Fakirmohan is distinctively direct and straight-forward in some of his poems which centre round the dignity of man. A

poem on "Dhoba" (Washerman) carries a revolutionary message in the caste-ridden society.

In his attitude towards the religious significance of the created world, the poet does not subscribe to the so-called orthodox Hindu views of the Divine as propagated by patriarchs in Brahminical tradition in Orissa. His two poems, eg "Yamarajara Daravara" (In the Court of the God of Death, Sept. 1917) and "Manavatmara Swarga Yatra" (The Journey of the Human Soul to Heaven, May 1914), the poet is extremely critical about religious fundamentalists. The 'Gate of Heaven' is closed to the staunch adherents of Islam, Christianity and Vaishnavism who do not have respect for prophets of other religious schools. His love for monotheism-cum-Brahmoism is evident in his poem, "Kiye Mo Iswara" (Who is My God) where he gives his conclusive opinion as follows :

A wood-cutter severs a piece of log by his axe
A sculptor by his chisel and saw fashions a form
A painter colours that form with several paints
Could that be the God, the Protector of my soul ?

A mason picks up a stone from a rock
A statue he sculpts by his hammer and chisel
And decks it out to make an image exquisite
Could that be the God, the Saviour of my soul ?

An artist kneads a lump of clay and cow-dung
And from that he fashions a splendid form
Let children play with such dolls

I shall worship it never as my God.

He, who has made the whole universe, is my God
(Know ye) He alone is the goal of my life, my Deliverer.

(trans. by the author)

While in Cuttack (1896-1905) Fakirmohan devoted his time to reading *Upanishads* extensively. In 1905, his unique *Upanishad Sangraha*, comprising verse-

Upanishada Sangraha **1905**

translations of seven *Upanishads*, eg the *Ishopanishad*, the *Kathopanishad*, the *Muktikopanishad*, the *Kenopanishad*, the *Taiteriyopanishad*, the *Mandukyopanishad* and the *Kaivalyopanishad* was published. It was printed at the Utkala Sahitya Press, Cuttack. His translation of the *Chhandogya Upanishad* was, however, published as a separate text in 1916, just two years before his death. The verse-translation is free from rhetoric and pedantry.

Fakirmohan's preoccupation with the monotheistic doctrine of the *Upanishads* might have prepared him for undertaking another literary exercise in a grand scale, and eventually led him to the writing of an epic on the Buddha, the Enlightened One. His earlier long poem, "Shakyasimha-Vairagya" (The Renunciation of Shakyasimha), published in *Puspamala* (1894) had probably paved the way for his *Bauddhavatara Kavya*.

Bauddhavatara Kavya **1909**

The *Bauddhavatara Kavya*, though composed in traditional metres, is a modern verse-epic. It was printed at De's Utkal Press, Balasore in 1909. This *Kavya* in 19 *sargas* or cantos is based on the life story of the Buddha, the propagator of one of the great religions of the world. In a long and scholarly Preface to this *Kavya*, the poet hails Buddhism as a unique religion that flourished in Asia without royal patronage or forcible proselytism. Fakirmohan believed that the Buddha was the incarnation of Narayana. The Holy Trinity in Shrikshetra-Puri, according to the poet, was the emblem of the *Buddha*, the *Sangha* and the *Dhamma*. The Buddhist practice of sharing food together irrespective of caste, according to the poet, is still in vogue in Puri, Bhubaneswar (Lingaraj *Kshetra*), Dhenkanal (Kapilas *Kshetra*) and Olasuni (the seat of saint Arakshita Das).

While composing this *Kavya,* Fakirmohan acknowledges his indebtedness to some of the Bengali books and journals which portrayed the life of the Buddha; besides, his study of some original texts. It appears that he depended on Ashvaghosha's *Buddha Charitam; Lalita Vistara,* the ancient Buddhist text; Sir Edwin Arnold's The *Light of Asia* and Naveen Chandra Sen's *Amitabh.*

Fakirmohan took forty-two days (from *Phalguna Shukla dashami* to *Vaisakha Krushna ekadashi*, in 1828 *sak* or from February to April, 1906) to compose this *kavya.* He says he had earlier composed a *kavya, Maharshi Gautama Charita* in 1894. The manuscript lay, somehow, uncared for over a long time and when retrieved, it was found moth-eaten and damaged.

The epic, in the new version, describes Asita Maharshi's apocalyptic intimation to Suddhodana, the Sakya king of Kapila Nagar about the forthcoming birth of the Buddha : 'His queen Mayadevi would be blest with a son who would be having thirty-two evident and eighty concealed signs on his body. The child would be a Saviour of the mankind. He would renounce the world in his youth and would be known as Sakyamuni Tathagata. He would be brought up by his step-mother in his infancy.'

The child was born as predicted. The Queen-mother died after a week and the infant was brought up by Gautami in the palace. Once during the *Halotsava* (the Ploughing Ceremony), the young prince chanced to witness a swan shot by a fowler, named Devadatta in the woods. The prince rescued the bird, nursed it and set it free. He retired to the forest and sat beneath a *jamun* tree for long. Five flying saints recognised him as the incarnation of Narayana. The prince was found in deep meditation in the forest. He was finally brought to the palace by the king and his courtiers.

The king got his son Siddhartha married in a haste to a beautiful girl, Gopa, when he was nineteen. A pleasure-house on the bank of the river Rohini was built by the king in an effort to wean his son away from other-worldliness.

The sixth *sarga* monitors Siddhartha's cognition of the impermanence of life, physical love and earthly pleasures when he

heard someone was playing on a harp. The music made him contemplative.

The seventh *sarga* describes the well-known scenes which made Siddhartha resolute to renounce the world. Those scenes were - an old man, a man suffering from a painful disease, a dead body and finally a blissful ascetic.

Gopa's narration of her nightmare did not perturb Siddhartha. In the dead hours of the night when he visited the harem, he saw the macabre faces of dancing damsels and the female singers who were royal recruits for the celebration of his son's auspicious birth. The nocturnal sight had an awful impact on him. He decisively bid farewell to his sleeping wife, and pursuaded his disquiet father to permit him to leave. His servant Chhandaka reluctantly fetched the horse, Kantaka. Siddhartha galloped away to the wilderness. It was almost dawn when he reached the Venu forest on the bank of the river Anama. He dismounted from his horse, cast off his royal attire, dressed himself like a monk and bade his faithful servant Chhandaka and the horse a lasting farewell.

Siddhartha embarked upon his solitary journey in quest of knowledge. He followed the up-stream course of the river, passed by the hermitage of Tridandima, and met Aradhakalama Maharshi in Vaisali. He received initiation from him, but later felt that it would not help him to access into the mystery of birth, disease, old age and death. Then he went to Magadha, the kingdom of Bimbisara who was greatly influenced by the young ascetic. Siddhartha came to the hermitage of Rudraka Maharshi on the Mt. Pandava and learnt from him the secrets of *naivamangyanam* and *asangayatana*. Since these two esoteric methods could not ensure Siddhartha salvation, his quest was extended in an intensified form.

He set out for Gaya in the company of his five disciples, and on the bank of the river Niranjana, he meditated for six years. During his austere meditation, once Mayadevi, his mother appeared in his trance to falsify the prognosis of Asit Maharshi and to dissuade him from such exercise. Later, during the sixth year of his meditation apparitions of five coy mistresses appeared to lure him away. Even

a vampire materialised herself before Siddhartha announcing that she was the embodiment of death whom Siddhartha would be obliged to take resort to at the cessation of his physical body. Indra, too; appeared before him holding a three-stringed harp. He saw two strings of the harp snapped when Indra started playing on it. That sign coveyed to him that the physical body would be sustained at any cost to attain *siddhi* or enlightenment.

The fifteenth *sarga* refers to Siddhartha's attainment of *Siddhi* after six years of vigorous meditation. All his five disciples had already abandoned him. It was morning. He took bath in the Niranjana river, and resumed his meditation beneath the *Pipal* tree (the *Bodhidruma*) nearby. One Sujatadatta, the daughter of Nandikapati while coming to the woods for offering prayer to the sylvan deity, mistook Siddhartha as the deity of the forest and offered him sweet dishes. Siddhartha, who did not have a morsel of food for last six years, was extremely hungry. He accepted what was offered to him by Sujata, the stranger. Thereafter, he commenced his begging of alms in the adjacent hamlet, Gochara. Thus, the Enlightened One commenced his mendicancy. His heart was over-flowing with the beatitude of *nirvana*.

The Buddha stayed for fifty-two days in the Tarayana forest and observed fasting. Then, he repaired to the village Uruvillva where he met two merchants from Utkala, eg Epure [Tapassu] and Bhellika. Their cart loaded with merchandise was stuck in deep mire, and they sought help from the blissful ascetic who ungrudgingly extended assistance. The merchants were pleased and offered some gift to Sakyamuni, the Buddha.

The Enlightened One then thought of going out to preach the realised doctrine for the benefit of the mankind. He remembered Rudraka and Aradhakalama, but could immediately know by clairvoyance that Rudrak had already expired a week ago and Aradhakalam just three days back. He could know about his five disciples (who had deserted him) then at Mrugadaya in Kasi. Thither he went. On the way Sakyamuni had to encounter a pedantic brahmin, Ajivaka. Then he came to the Bhagirathi river and asked

the boatman to ferry him across the river. The boatman demanded ferrying fee. Since the Buddha had nothing on him, he chose to fly over the river and the news of this spectacular feat soon reached the ears of the native king who made a royal proclamation that no fee would be realised from monks and holymen hereafter.

The Buddha met his five disciples at Mrugadaya and taught them the significance of the *Dharma Chakra*. In course of time, a Pandit named Kasyapa, the king Bimbisara, the venerable brahmin Sariputta and Maudgalayana were initiated to the new doctrine, preached by the Buddha.

The 17th *sarga* brings the Buddha from Magadha to his erstwhile kingdom Kapilavastu after a spell of seven years. The king Suddhodana in the meanwhile had died. Gopa and her son Rahul, her cousin Nanda and the women folk of Kapilavastu accepted Buddhism. The royal palace in Kapilavastu now looked like a necropolis. The women ascetics were included in the *theri* wing of Buddhism.

The Buddha resumed his meditation on the Mt. Kausambi and on the Mt. Mukula. A brahmin of Ekanala village; a thief of Alabi; Krishna (Kissa) Gautami of Sravanti; a goldsmith; a youngman; Queen Kshamadevi; Bhadra; the princess Sumedha; Visakha; Utpalavarana and Ambapalli had aheady become Buddha's disciples.

The Buddha became eighty. He was staying in Kausambi. He confided in Ananda, his closest disciple that he would retain his physical body only for three months hence. He nominated Kasyapa to hold on to the *dharma chakra* after his death. On his way to Kusinagar, he had to receive meat-dish for alms from an impish Chandadatta. He could not refuse. It made him sick. He, somehow, managed to reach the *shalivana*. It was the star-studded full-moon night. The Buddha sat on a yogic pose and spoke to Ananda- 'Listen. I took meat-dish from Chandadatta. I am dying now. I am grateful to Sujatadatta who for the first time served me food after six years of my meditation that made me Buddha and I am now equally grateful to Chandadatta whose alms was well-timed.' It is edifying to note that Fakirmohan composed a small poem in fourteen lines on "Sujata" in May, 1916.

Gautama Buddha sent for his disciples. He spoke to the assembly of his disciples that he was just releasing himself from the cycle of Karma, and was about to leave the mortal world. His disciples Maudgali and Sariputta, his step mother Gautami, his wife Gopa and his son Rahul had already died. He exhorted the present assembly to abide by the following eight canons, eg look good, speak the truth, stick to noble determination, exhibit good conduct, do virtuous deeds, practise holy remembrances, practise truthfulness and dispel inner conflicts. He also appraised them of ten main sources of suffering.

The hour of the *mahanirvana* came. The Buddha closed his eyes and became wordless. The disciples cried aloud : 'We take resort to the *Dhamma*, to the *Buddha* and to the *Sangha*'.

The nocturnal breeze suddenly became still. Lonely was the forest. Beneath the lofty *sal* tree the Buddha entered into *samadhi*. The disciples smeared their Master's body with ghee. Before the day break, the mortal body was put on the pyre of sandal-wood. This *kavya,* in a way, an adaptation of Naveen Chandra Sen's *Amitabh,* had been a great comfort to Fakirmohan during his old age.

Fakirmohan, as it appears, was a 'poet of fact' and not a 'poet of aesthetics'. He made a bold departure from the earlier poetic tradition by choosing to compose his poems in simple Oriya diction, in the living language of the people, shorn of philistinism. His appeal was direct, without any conscious craftsmanship and artificiality. His taste for music probably prompted him to make use of traditional metres and rhyming pattern, particularly in his lyrics, narrative verses and elegies. In the two cantos out of nineteen cantos of the *Bauddhavatara Kavya,* he described the episodes in unrhymed free verse. He took to poetry to wriggle out of his lonely shut-ins, and to bring respectability to his mothertongue.

Fakirmohan was critical about the orthodox ignorant brahmins who were in the habit of exploiting common people. He recorded his reactions against them in some of his poems. The reformistic attitude in him probably urged him to compile some of the essential and rudimentary features of prayer for the benefit of practicing

***Brahma nanam Sandhya-Paddhatih* 1914**

brahmins. As such, he published a booklet in Sanskrit, *Brahmananam Sandhya-Paddhatih* in 1914.

Fakirmohan had another digression. Co-operative Societies were formed to advance loan to the needy, and to encourage deposit in the savings bank. Fakirmohan felt that poor villagers and the public should be conversant with the rules and regulations of the Co-operative Society. He prepared the booklet, *Samavaya Runa Samiti Prasanga*, in a question-answer method which was published in 1916. This book was based on the twelve explanatory notes pertaining to the role and benefits of the co-operative societies prepared by B.A. Collins, the officiating Registrar of co-operative societies, Bihar and Orissa. He received commendation from the Government for popularising such a welfare scheme of the government in lucid Oirya verse.

***Samavaya runa Samiti prasanga* 1916**

Fakirmohan dedicated this booklet to Mr. B.A. Collins and also to R.G. Kilby, Collector, Balasore.

Fakirmohan's world view is explicitly pronounced in some of his poems which we miss in his stories and fictions. He believed in the coalescence of all essentials of world religions. To him the Buddha, Christ, Mahammad, Adi Shankaracharya, Nanak, Shri Caitanya and Rama Mohan Ray verily shine out as "the Saptarshi". He was bold enough to pronounce that Hinduism alone would not ensure global cohesiveness. Faith, sacrifice, love and devotion, he felt, were essential for cohesive existence. This integrated world view of Fakirmohan is reflected in the temple he built in Shanti Kanan with quotations from various religious texts.

3.6 Fakirmohan's Short Stories : A Brief Discussion

Fakirmohan is acclaimed as the father of modern Oriya fiction and the prose narrative. He spent nearly two decades of his life from 1897 to 1916 to present his readers with a variety of tales, anecdotes, historical features, narrations of true events, short stories and novels. The following table enlists twenty-four short stories so far available.

His two anecdotes, eg *Ascharya Swapna* (A Strange Dream) and *Mumhare Nian* (Damn You) were published in *Sambadavahika* in 1877 and 1887 respectively.

1. Rebati, October, 1898 (published in *Utkala Sahitya*)
2. Kula Kuntala, October, 1899 (ibid)
3. Kavitwa Visarjana (Abdication of the Art of Versification), Feb-June, 1907 (published in *Mukura*)
4. Mauna Mauni (A Pair of Mutes), May, 1907 (ibid)
5. Baleswari Rahajani (Burglary in Balasore), July, 1907 (ibid)
6. Baleswari Punga Luna (Manufacture of Crude Salt in Balasore), Sept., 1907 (ibid)
7. Suna Nakachana (A gold-top for the Nose), Feb-March 1909 (ibid)
8. Punarmusiko Bhava (Be a Rat again), April-May, 1909 (ibid)
9. Dak Munshi (The Sub-Post-Master), Sept, 1912 (ibid)
10. Dhulia Baba (The Dusty Saint), Feb., 1913 (published in *Utkala Sahitya*)
11. Kamala Prasad Gorap, May, 1913 (ibid)
12. Suna Bohu (The Golden (or Good) Daughter-in-law), June, 1913 (ibid)
13. Randipua Ananta (Ananta, the Widow's-Son), July, 1913 (published in *Mukura*)
14. Kalika Prasad Gorap, August, 1913 (published in *Utkala Sahitya*)
15. Patent Medicine, September, 1913 (ibid)
16. Birei Bishal, October, 1913 (ibid)

17. Sabhya Zamindar (The Civilized Zamindar), March, 1914 (ibid)
18. Bohu Roga (A Bride's Infirmity), March, 1914 (published in *Mukura*)
19. Bagala Baguli (A Pair of Herons), April, 1914 (published in *Utkala Sahitya*)
20. Aja-Nati Katha (A Dialogue Between the Grand-dad and the Grandson), April, 1915 (ibid)
21. Pathoi Bohu (The Educated Daughter-in-law), June, 1915 (published in *Mukura*)
22. Adharma Vitta (Ill-got Money), Aug., 1915 (published in *Utkala Sahitya*)
23. Madha Mahantinka Kanya-Suna (Madha Mahanti's Demand for Brideprice), Oct., 1915 (ibid)
24. Garudi Mantra (The Magic Antidote against Snakebite), Nov., 1916 (ibid)

Fakirmohan's first story collection, *Galpa Swalpa* containing 14 stories, eg 'Rebati', 'Mauna Mauni', 'Dak Munshi', 'Dhulia Baba', 'Kamala Prasad Gorap', 'Suna Bohu', 'Patent Medicine', 'Birei Bishal', 'Sabhya Zamindar', 'Bagula Baguli', 'Pathoi Bohu', 'Adharma Vitta', 'Madha Mahantinka Kanya Suna' and 'Garudi Mantra' was printed at Utkala Sahitya Press in October, 1917. Of these 14 short stories, three stories, eg 'Mauna Mauni', 'Dak Munshi' and 'Pathoi Bohu' and the rest eleven stories were already printed in the literary monthlies, *Mukura* and *Utkala Sahitya* respectively between 1898 and 1916.

Mohinimohana, the son of Fakirmohan, retrieved his father's six more stories and published all total 20 stories in two parts in 1924, giving the book the title *Galpa Salpa* and not *Galpa Swalpa*. These two volumes were printed at the Union Printing Works, Cuttack. The scholarly haunt for tracing more unpublished stories of Fakirmohan is still on. Queer it may sound, Fakirmohan used many pen-names, eg Panchuchandra Dhirendra Mohanty (ascribed to his humorous write-up, 'Nananka Panji'), Shri Darabara Toutara (writer of 'Yamarajara Darabara', a poem),

Gopala Chudamani Tarkapanchanana ('Utkala Bhramanam'), Dhurjati, Shri and Shri Darshaka. As such, the stories, 'Kula Kuntala' (1899), 'Kavitva Visarjana' (1907) and 'Bohu Roga' (1914) were published under the pen-names of Dhurjati, Shri and Shri Darshaka respectively.

Recently, scholars have located a story 'Suna Nakachana' (1909) and two anecdotes, eg 'Ascharya Swapna' (1877) and 'Mumhare Nian' (1887) which were authored by none other than Fakirmohan.

Fakirmohan had sharpened his pen against social injustice such as the child marriage, forced labour, moneylenders' exploitation, implementation of sterner rules for the conduct of young widows and injunctions against widow-marriage, religious prejudices and fanaticism, the impact of English education and anglicism on the rural youths, the loopholes of the British administrative system including its powerful wing of judiciary and abuse of power. Fakirmohans' stories mirror the whole spectrum of social scenes of his times which are real assets for rewriting the 19th century socio-cultural history of Orissa. Orissa was a free pasture for the *bergees* and burglars and for the *Naga jamauts.* His stories enlighten the readers about Orissa's flourishing maritime trade and shipping. In short, all his stories are read as a transcript of the 19th century and the first quarter of the 20th century Orissa's socio-economic profile. As a past-master of story-telling, Fakirmohan makes use of his native literary skills, eg banters, innuendoes, innocuous and mild invectives, authorial intrusions, exhortation to readers for participatory response and intratextual parallelisms. Most of the time he remains external to the treatment of his theme and portrayal of characters, but at times, he does not hesitate to rush into it as a medieval knight.

Outlines of the fourteen short stories, published in *Galpa Swalpa* (1917) are given below. Besides, additional seven short stories are also summarized.

1. REBATI

His first short story 'Rebati' was published in 1898, (Its English translation by Prof. B.K. Satpathy is appended in this book). The story of a girl-child Rebati getting initiated to literacy by a young school teacher with the consent of her father is fraught with admonitions from her grandma, and it turns out to be a tragic one with the death of Rebati's parents and that of the tutor in quick succession, ultimately eclipsing the life of the girl-learner, Rebati who had received her first initiation on an auspicious day of the Hindu calendar, eg *Shripanchami*. Why Fakirmohan opened the magic box of his stories with such a tragic anecdote is quite beguiling. He is much restrained in giving vent to Rebati's inner stirrings — her girlish excitement in the coveted company of the young tutor. A series of calamities that the author evoked to ruin the family through the intervention of Providence is another aspect of the writer's defencelessness. He was developing his masterpiece, *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* now almost for a year, which carried the seeds of *Rebati* - the loss of ancestral land and bovine assets and exploitation. There, illiterate Saria, the elder version of Rebati died in desertion and of starvation, in the way the little girl Rebati died. Anyway, this story certainly has a brain-storming dimension. The story prefixed a few lines from the writing of Rev.J.H.Gurney when it first appeared in *Utkala Sahitya* as follows - *But oft some shining April Morn / Is darkened in an hour And blackest griefs O'eroyous home / Alas ! unseen may lower.*

2. MAUNA MAUNI (A Pair of Mutes)

There was an uneasy lull for almost six years. The story of Fakirmohan 'Mauna Mauni' appeared in the summer of 1907. The story is set in the Khandagiri Hill of Bhubaneswar which was once a shelter ground for many fake saints who flocked together from various parts of India. The *Mauna* (Mute) *Sadhu* of the story happened to be a *gumasta* of a wealthy man in Calcutta and his mate, the Mauni *sadhvi* was a young widow of that rich man's family. They were finally caught and remanded to the police custody.

The story refers to an incident in 1850s. The Khandagiri hill on the outskirts of Bhubaneswar was a temporary habitat for many wandering *sadhus, sannyasis, Nagas, Ramauts* and *Jamauts.* The *Jamauts,* a Hindu sect of *sadhus* used to come in large number with well-equipped itinerary needs and provisions carried on the backs of camels, ponies and elephants. They used to exploit the villagers during their pilgrimage.

Fakirmohan describes a particular class of *sadhus* who had raised their camp in front of the Elephant Cave at Khandagiri. A *dhuni,* the sacred-fire was lit there, and on its opposite side, the *sadhus* placed an idol of Mahavir, on a small throne. The head of the *sadhus* was a tall, hefty man having strong muscles, named Mahanta Mahavir Das. He used to scan and censor every new visitor. His age was too mysterious to guess. (The writer makes fun of a strange *sadhu* in his birthtown, Balasore who was supposed to be a thousand-year old and fed on milk only.)

Near the Elephant Cave, there was another small cave where a *sadhu* - couple sojourned. The male *sadhu* was around thirty and the female *sadhu* was young and exceedingly beautiful. She was a youthful woman having long hair. Both of them used to remain inside the cave all the while. They were being looked after by Mahant Mahavir Das and his followers.

None of the visitors ever stayed overnight in the company of those *sadhus* at Khandagiri. It was detected that two Bengali devotees were in company with the said *sadhu*-couple for over a month and kept themselves engaged in fetching hemp leaves for them. The male *sadhu* and the lady *sadhu* obviously never exchanged words and were known as *Mauna* and *Mauni.* (the mute or speechless ones).

Later, it was reported that Mahanta Mahavir Das and his twenty-five disciples and the mute couple were arrested for various crimes. The Mauna Baba was an erstwhile *gumasta* of a rich business man in Calcutta and his young beautiful mate was a young widow of that rich man's family. The two fake Bengali devotees

were sleuths deployed there to spy on the activities of the *sadhus*. The Magistrate of Puri forwarded them to Calcutta.

Fakirmohan never desisted from exposing such social maladies, religious hypocrisies and the men behind the mask by his journalistic and investigative acumen. A major aspect of his literary mission was commitment to the social cause.

3. DAK MUNSHI (Sub-Postmaster)

The story was published in September, 1912. It centres round only two characters—a Middle English School passed son, Gopal Singh who became a village sub-postmaster and an old father Hari Singh who retired from the post of an orderly from Cuttack Post Office at an extended superannuated age. Hari Singh had been serving in the Cuttack Sadar Post Office for last 10 years. On his fervent request, his son was appointed a Sub-Postmaster in Makrampur village. He was to remain an apprentice for the initial four months at Cuttack. Gopal used to dress up himself as a gentleman and behaved like an urbane-bred. His interactions with gentlemen aired his deportment. Then he started looking down upon his father who, he thought, was ill-bred, uncouth and rustic. Even the son hesitated to introduce his father to his floating guests.

The day when Gopal left Cuttack for his new place of posting at the village Makrampur, he urged his father to carry his luggage and not to hire a coolie. The old asthmatic father obeyed his educated son's order. The old man could not cope with the rural climate. His health worsened with bad coughing bouts at night that disturbed his son's sound sleep. Next morning, he summoned his orderly and told him to throw the old haggard into the *kia* (screw pine) bushes. The peon could not read the Babu's mind. The old man was down with fever, and had not eaten anything for last three days. The cold had made his condition still worse. His son's annoyance had crossed the limit. He hit at the chest of his father. The writer says, 'it was *English ghushi*' he flailed.

The old father left his son's place at once and went to his village. He had two acres of cultivable land which he gave out for

share-cropping and lived happily. The story-teller makes a request at the end, "*Dear readers, please be happy at others' happiness.*"

4. DHULIA BABA (The Dusky Saint)

The story, 'Dhulia Baba' was published in February, 1913. The story is both farcical and tragic. It is partly based on a real incident which the writer had heard about in Dasapalla.

The story is cast in Degaon, near the shrine of Hanuman-Ji. The writer describes a legend. Once a *sadhu,* Hanuman Das occupied the *gadi* for 'one thousand twelve hundred and one years and twelve days'. He was a superman who could ride on a broken wall to greet a Maratha Fauzdar. He died at his own will. His disciple, Markata Das from Ayodhya who succeeded him, occupied the preceptorial *gadi* for 1500 years. Like his preceptor, he also came to meet the British officer at Cuttack. While crossing the flooded river Mahanadi, he spread his tiger-hide on the water, sat on it, and miraculously crossed the river. The British officer was left dumb-struck.

Jambuban *Mahanta* succeeded him. He was equally fabled as a superman. The present *Mahanta* is one Bandara Das. He does not eat much, though he looks obese and hefty. He takes only ten *seers* of milk daily, and is addicted to opium and hashish. He brags that he once came from Ayodhya to Puri during the consecration - ceremony of the Jagannath temple. He is very rich now. The main source of his income is from both the two parties fighting criminal cases. He blesses both of them but separately, for some consideration. The one who wins the case pays the Baba lavishly.

It so happened, that there was a civil dispute between two brothers, Rama Sau and Shama Sau. The Baba kept his sacred fire ever lit, and circulated the news through his disciples that seekers of his blessings could personally hear from the *dhuni* or the sacred fire directly.

The *sadhu* dug a secret chamber, just below the fire-place. He used to deploy a man who would crawl into it and reply to the querries made by supplicants. The *Sadhu* would sit near the fire-place and would strike the fire by his poker. Sham Sau was

influenced by the gossip-mongers. He petitioned to the *Sadhu,* craving his blessings for winning the case. He brought five *seers* of ghee and other requisites. The fire was on. *Sadhu's* man was underneath the fire scaffold. The *Sadhu* was sitting near the fire-place just after taking a heavy dose of opium and cannabis. The crowd was shouting in glee. Sham Sau was supplicating with folded palms. The *Sadhu* went on beating the fire by his forked iron in a frenzy. The fire-scaffold collapsed and hit the *Sadhu.* Both, the man beneath and the *Sadhu* in the sanctum were instantly burnt to death. Thus the *Sadhu* who used to roll in the dust and was popularly known as *Dhulia Baba* or the Dusty Saint met his tragic end.

Fakirmohan plays with blind beliefs of the people and scoffs at those who suddenly become larger than life by gambling with the folk's faith. The preceptorial order, described by the writer, is jocular, for all those *sadhus* introduced to the readers bear names synonymous with monkey, an indicator of all their monkey-business.

5. KAMALA PRASAD GORAP

This story was first published in 1913. This story tells about the flourishing trade of shipping merchandise that the port-town Balasore once was known for. It had overseas trade link with Rangoon, Java, Borneo, Visakhapattanam, Chinapatana, Ceylone, Malay and Laksha islands. Moneyed business men then owned many a ship of different makes. Some ships were also brought from Calcutta, Rangoon or imported from European countries. The ships varied in size and contrivance. The large ship was known as *Gorap,* the middle-sized one as *Sulup* and the smaller one *Duuni.* The ships of Orissa carried different trade-names, eg Kamala Prasad, Uma Prasad, Durga Prasad, Ishwari Prasad, Kalika Prasad etc. all of which were primarily after the names of goddesses.

This story, 'Kamala Prasad Gorap', referred to a large ship owned by Babu Ramahari Naik which used to carry merchandise to the Chinapatna or Madras (now Chennai) harbour. The writer in this story has referred to an unhappy incident that occurred around 1852-53 as to how Kamala Prasad Gorap, the ship was reportedly

wrecked, causing a great loss to its owner Ramahari Naik and how it was traced again when the crew were caught after police intervention.

On an auspicious fullmoon day around midday, the ship sailed away for Chinapatna under the command of the head sailor, Majhi Swarupa Behera. It took almost eight to nine days to reach Madras. The return voyage was heralded on the first day of the dark fortnight, after receiving a cash of rupees twelve thousand from the sailing agent Apudu Swami at Chinapatna (Madras) harbour. After reaching Balasore, the Majhi appeared before Ramahari Naik in the *cutchery* and announced that a tragedy befell his return voyage on account of a ghastly sea-storm in the mid-ocean. He reported that the ship developed some holes at the bottom, water gushed in, and the ship was drowned at the False Point Light House. He and his shipmates, according to his narration, saved their lives, somehow, by life-boats. When he narrated this account, he was looking really crest-fallen. Naik's family heard this story. The entire house was struck dumb. Some of the inmates who had invested their savings in the procurement and sale of merchandise were in profound grief. The village astrologer who fixed the auspicious day for the ship's onward and return journey was immediately summoned. He scribbled on the floor for long hours and asserted that such a tragedy could never befall.

The case was reported to the police. The Majhi and sixteen other shipmates were rounded up. They confessed that they had conspired this by taking advantage of a storm that blew over the coastal region of Balasore. The investigation said that the Kamala Prasad Gorap (the ship) left Madras on 1st May and reached the Dhamara river confluence in the evening of 9th May. Since a storm was approaching, the *Majhi* sailed it away to the Ghadiala river where it was anchored. That place was close to the *Majhi's* own village, Makramapur. All left the ship except four shipmates of lower rank who remained in charge. By midnight, the storm grew high and heavy rains lashed. The ship could no more remain under control and got stuck in the sandy shore. Next day in the early morning, the *Majhi* came back hurriedly to the ship, and to his panic, he found it

difficult to dislodge the ship from the sandy shore. He was also aware of the rumour that the shipping business in Balasore would come to an end very soon. They decided that they would share the money and go enmasse to the owner of the ship and report to him that the ship "Kamala Prasad" had capsized.

Within four to six days hence, the ship slid off the shore on account of heavy tidal flow on the ensuing fullmoon day and it moved rudderless in the sea. It was moving towards the river Ganges, but suddenly changed its direction at the Balasore off-shore buoy and then entered the Budhabalanga river.

It was later learnt that the ship's crew including the Majhi had to serve imprisonment for four years each. The sooth-sayer Kamala Lochana Nayak was found moving about the town for a month, proudly clad in silken clothes. He was also ostentatiously displaying a pair of gold-bracelets which he received as reward for his proficiency in astrology.

6. SUNA BOHU (The Golden Bride)

The story 'Suna Bohu' or the Golden (Good) Daughter-in-law was published in June, 1913. The writer intended to teach a lesson to an obstinate young bride Nima who disliked to perform the household chores in her husband's house and made her mother-in-law do the same instead. Two months after the marriage, a second marriage of her husband was faked up and accordingly pre-marital fake rituals were planned. The bride in utter exasperation, realised her lapses. She had to undergo some sort of physical punishment as dictated by her husband and his sister. The writer, as a social reformer, does his job well by inculcating a sense of discipline in the offenders particularly in the defiants who declined to shake off their false vanity.

The entire story is cast in the village Gopinathapur under Salepur *pargana*. The main characters in the story are Sibasundara, son of Ramahari Patnaik and Bimala; Champa, the daughter of Ramahari and wife of Dibakar; Nima, the newly-wed bride of Sibasundara, and a granny named Ani.

The brother and sister, Sibasundara and Champa conspired to penalize Nima who deliberately groused to do the household chores. Even, she made her mother-in-law do odd jobs for her. Both the brother and sister arranged a fake marriage, so that Nima would decide whether to stay there as a maid or quit. The conch blew. Guests were to arrive. The old granny went to meet Nima who was now dolefully weeping. She said that she was prepared to act in any manner as would be expected of her. Her husband told her to rub her nose on the ground. So she did, and gave her consent amidst sobs that she would hereafter do all the household chores by herself alone. The neighbourhood became aware of this change. Bimala Dei, the widow mother-in-law of Nima went on repeating that her daughter-in-law was really a piece of gold. Thus, she was transformed to a 'Suna Bohu'.

7. PATENT MEDICINE

The story 'Patent Medicine' was published in September, 1913. The story carries the narrator's message to all housewives to make an experiment of a patent antedote on their lascivious husbands who become dipsomaniac. The prescribed therapy is to beat the wreck black and blue. This is indeed a humorous approach to diffuse a tragic tension which often slowly gets built up in a cosy domestic establishment.

The author presents two main characters, eg Chandramani Patnaik, son of Zamindar Shyama Patnaik and Sulochana, daughter of Ramakrishna Mohanty. They are husband and wife. In their aristocratic set-up, they have a servant, Makra and a brahmin cook.

The story begins with some suffocating disciplinary injunctions imposed on Chandramani (who had already left three jobs in the past, ruined his health by visiting cheap women in the red-light area of Telengabazar and habitually remained drunk for the better part of the day.)

Chandramani receives a written message brought to him by a lad of Bhadraka—the message sent by a woman of ill repute, Usman

Tara. Chandramani manipulates to wriggle out of his wife's surveillance by making multiple pleas. He bribes his servant to lie covered in a sheet of cloth in a separate room impersonating him. He then stealthily goes out to be entertained by Usman Tara, the prostitute. Earlier, he has told his wife that he would be alone in his room for meditation and prayer for Lord Siva till 9 pm at night for his rapid recovery, without food and drink. The room should not be visited by any woman. He befools his wife with sweet words.

Sulochana becomes worried about her husband's austere vow. She goes there to have a glimpse of her husband, but unwittingly her leg strikes her husband's head. She becomes apologetic and prays to God for forgiveness. Then doubts engulf her. She detects the man asleep there without beard is not her husband, but her domestic page boy. She then devises a plan to trap her lax husband unawares. She bribes the servant, sends him away and hides herself in a corner.

Chandramani returns all goozled up. He presumes his faithful servant to be lying there. He scolds his wife for her niggardly attitude and makes a parody of her name. He mocks at her parentage, and praises the prostitute, the 'Bright Star of the Sky' lavishly. Sulochana is out of wits now. She comes out from her hiding, picks up the broom and thrashes her husband repeatedly in a frenzy of anger and despair.

Chandramani gets up next morning late. Sulochana repents for what she did and applies massage to the affected parts of her husband's body. The couple, it is said, lived happily thereafter. Two villagers, Shyamaghana and Gopi express their surprise when they find the couple sharing a happy blessed conjugal life. Gopi comments - it is the result of the magic therapy, the patent medicine that Sulochana administered to her husband. It is indeed a proven panacea against all ills emanating from erratic husbands.

8. BIREI BISALA

The story, 'Birei Bisala' is published in October, 1913. It is comparatively a longer one where the writer hints at many social issues eg child marriage, girls at nine marrying old widowers above sixty, payment of brideprice, deceitful exploitation by relatives,

maternal uncles and aunt, forced child labour, insinuative attempts to bribe some conscientious zamindars, circulation of counterfeit coins, theft of oxen, moneylenders' demand for exorbitant rent etc. The story truly mirrors such wide spectrum of social injustice and Fakirmohan's concern as a social reformer.

The main character Birei, an orphan at five, belonged to Mukundapur village. His late parents were Makru and Duti who died of sudden heart attack. His maternal uncle Pitei Patra of Makalpur, with an eye on his nephew's property (15 acres of fertile land) and assets, rushed to him when Birei's parents died. Like Nazir Natabara in *Mamu*, Pitei reprimanded the villagers as thieves. He escorted orphan Birei to his village. He managed to transfer all paddy, rice, clothings and utensils from Birei's house at night when the villagers were asleep, to his own village. His son, Chandi was five years elder to Birei. He was naughty and unmindful to studies. Birei was forced to discontinue his study as Chandi was withdrawn from the village *Pathashala* at the behest of his illiterate mother. Birei became a herdboy, and remained in charge of the domestic cows. Chandi grew up scotfree and wild. He became a branded thief in the company of his bad associates. Birei's ageing uncle and aunt took to opium for relief from chronic asthma.

Birei decided to raise his own shattered house in his village and live there independently. His uncle and aunt did not approve of it as their interests were involved. But nothing availed against Birei's insistence. Birei went back to his village, worked there as a daily wage and raised a thatch over his head. His uncle's plan to smuggle out Birei's land by influencing the zamindar Shyama Swain did not work.

Birei was now around thirty. It was high time that he should get married. He had some fasciation for a fourteen-year shy and pretty village girl named Kamali. She was also attracted toward him. She never missed the hour when Birei used to return from his fields. She would come outdoors to fetch water in her pitcher and would never take her eyes off. Even if the pitcher was full, she would empty it

soon and come out with her empty pitcher for refilling fresh water while Birei would be sighted over there.

Birei engaged the village priest Bhimei Mishra to mediate. Kamali's father Raghaba Patra was a greedy fellow. He had given marriage to his two nine-year old daughters to two widower-oldsters at a brideprice of thousand rupees each. Her elder sisters eventually became green-widows. Now for Kamali, Raghaba quoted one thousand rupees and finally settled the brideprice at seven hundred. The pricing of his daughters he wanted to give in marriage was based on the expenses he incurred towards the cost of their food and upbringing.

Kamali was given a ceremonial send-off from her father's house soon after her marriage. She accompanied the bridegroom, Birei to his house. When the village women ushered her in, they noticed Kamali's abdomen a bit swollen, and started gossiping that she was already pregnant. Birei became ruffled and felt uncomfortable. Kamali noticed it. She beckoned her husband aside and unfastened the belt that girdled her belly where she hid one thousand rupees, and gave it to Birei.

The money she stole from her father was Birei's which he had paid to her father, Raghaba toward the brideprice. It also included her father's savings of rupees three hundred which actually belonged to her two widow sisters who were now living in misery. Kamali requested Birei to send the surplus money to them. Raghaba when he knew about the missing purse, rushed to his daughter Kamali for his money back. He was roughed up by Kamali's neighbours, and had to return empty-handed.

Raghaba's son Chandi who had married earlier, emerged as a notorious rogue. He was caught by the police for stealing villagers' oxen and was awarded rigorous imprisonment for a year and a half. Kamali's father had incurred some loan from the moneylender, Madhu Sahu at the time of his son's marriage. He had not repaid the same. The usurer filed a suit, auctioned Raghaba's property including his

homestead. Kamali's parsimonious parents were driven out of their house, and Birei offered them shelter.

The short story 'Birei Bishal' and the novel, *Mamu* were published in the same year, i.e. in 1913. Both are based on an identical theme — maternal uncle's exploitation and punishment accorded to them. The novel *Mamu*, however, predates the short story 'Birei Bishal'.

9. SABHYA ZAMINDAR (An Educated Zamindar)

This story was published in March 1914. It is one of the descriptive visuals of Fakirmohan where he narrates how a metro-educated dilettante landed up as a wreck. Fakirmohan's casting of characters serves a definite artistic and social purpose.

His main character in this story is Rajibalochana, son of Gopala Chandra Mohapatra of a village near Jajpur. He worked under a rich merchant, named Balarama Bal in Calcutta. The merchant who mainly deals in tobacco leaves had a special fascination for his village boy Gopala. He brought Gopala to Calcutta and kept him under his care. Gopala helped him in his business and proved himself worthy, sincere and faithful. The merchant built a house for Gopala in his village and later, purchased an estate for him. The *mahajana* or the merchant decided to see Gopala really prosper in life. Gopala's lack of English education was, no doubt, a hindrance in dealing with European business houses in Calcutta, though he was skilled in business transaction.

Rajibalochana was the only son of Gopala. He was a truant, and became mischievous. The village teacher wanted to get rid of the zamindar's son. He gave a false report to Gopala that his son had completed his schooling successfully in the village. Gopala took his son to Calcutta and got him admitted to the Calcutta Andrew Academy. He studied there for four to five years. Gopala failed to monitor his son's academic progress as he himself had no competence. Rajibalochana neglected his studies, got into bad company, attended clubs and theatre halls. His friends advised him

to organise clubs. As such, under his aegis two associations were formed, eg Kusamskara Vimardini or an association for abolition of blind beliefs and another Nari Swadhinata Vivardhini Sabha. These two associations met regularly every week on Tuesday and Saturday respectively. The second association was meant for promotion of women's liberation. Rajiba became Secretary of the two associations and squandered his father's money to meet the expenses. Secretaries used to run such associations at their own expense in Calcutta. Rajibalochana took pride in lecturing at all sessions of the two associations.

In the meantime, Rajiba's father died of sudden heart attack. His death was condoled in specially arranged meetings by his educated son. He thought it prejudicious to observe his father's obsequies. The merchant, after the death of Gopala, engaged his son in his own business. Rajiba could not become regular in the association-meetings. His friends advised him that an educated son of a zamindar should not serve under any one. His friends' advice crept into his head. He became negligent in his duty while serving under the *mahajana.* Balarama Bala, the *mahajana* now lost all hope in Gopala's son. He finally sent away Rajibalochana to his village.

The home-coming of the young zamindar Rajibalochana was hailed by the people in the highly populated village of Shamapur in his *taluk*. Rajiba inquired to ascertain whether there were educated people in the village who were free from orthodox thinking. To his good luck, there appeared some smart people who were independent enthusiasts. Some of them had studied up to the Upper Primary level and some had failed in availing themselves of scholarships. They assembled before the young zamindar who loved to address the rural gathering. In his address he highlighted the evil of illiteracy, orthodox belief and slavery of women which he insisted upon being fought out on priority. Zamindar Rajiba's proposal was seconded by the middle English school-passed ex-Sub-Postmaster Haribola Patnaik. It was decided that there would be two associations,

eg Gyana Vivarddhini (for advancement of learning) and Stri Swadhinata Vivarddhini (for promotion of women emancipation). Haribola became secretary of the two associations which met daily and continued till late night at the expense of Rajibalochana. It was also decided to have a Girls' school and a Women's school soon.

The old superintendent of Rajiba's cutchery was dismissed as he could not siphon off money to meet the lavish prodigality. Haribola Patnaik who was once suspended and later acquitted, now remained both in charge of the two associations and the cutchery.

Rajibalochana's marriage with Nayanatara Shokapasora, daughter of Makra Malik, a chef-cum-butler serving under a manager of a tea-garden in Assam, was fixed through a broker. The girl had studied in the Scottish Baptist Orphan School run by Miss Duglas. Rajibalochana had to incur a loan of rupees ten thousand from a moneylender in Calcutta by pledging his estate on mortgage for his marriage. The marriage ceremony was stately. It was rumoured that a Raja of Orissa was getting married.

Rajiba's mother who was watching all these developments in her household felt disheartened. She preferred staying in the temple premises in front of the palace. The newly-wed bride on her first visit to the village greeted her, 'O my dear mother-in-law. I salute you'. With these words, when she advanced to shake her hand, her mother-in-law withdrew and reacted that the temple was getting desecrated. The young zamindar felt offended and raved - 'This is savage, sheer stupidity and bad manners. Oh ! How dare you insult a lady !' His mother felt hurt and soon left for Puri with her maid Radhi. She sojourned in the Mata Matha in Puri.

Mrs Mohapatra, the wife of Rajibalochana now almost reigned in the house. She held the traditional religious practices in abhorrence. Extravagant expenditure led to a great fiscal stringency and total mismanagement. The moneylender in Calcutta sued Rajibalochana for non-payment of the loan, aheady advanced to him. He got a decree and the palace of the zamindar was auctioned in Calcutta. Rajiba's wife desired to sell her ornaments but all her ornaments

were found to be counterfeit. The couple chose to abscond in the night. It was learnt after five or six years that the erstwhile educated zamindar was now engaged in the job of a butler in Assam, in the same place where his father-in-law worked.

10. BAGALA-BAGULI (A Pair of Herons)

The story 'Bagala-Baguli' was published in April, 1914. This story strikes a departure from Fakirmohan's other stories. Here the narrator's eye reports all it sees, without authorial intervention. The story is cast in a rural village, far away from the urban environs, and it breathes the simplicity and guilelessness of the serene folk life. The unvarnished spoken words, used here, carry a tremendous life-force without any artificiality or jargon. It is poetic indeed to call the protagonist and the prima-donna of the story, the innocent couple, as a pair of herons, who never desert each other's company. The author's love and respect for the lowly people, eg Saita in *Prayaschitta,* and Bidia, Sapna and Chemi in 'Bagala-Baguli' are quite evident.

Sapna, the son of a naive and religious night-watchman, Bidia Patra of Bhushundapur village, and Chemi, a young beautiful lass, the daughter of the Choukidar, Dandia Patra of Makramapur village and wife of Sapna, are the Bagala (male heron) and the Baguli (she-heron) of the story. Bidia's simplicity, innocence, humility and dutifulness earned him mass appreciation. His service to the people over half a century was quite rewarding to him. He used to listen to the *Bhagavata* recital each evening mindfully, and when asked, he would reticently offer his interpretation of the text with utter humility. Bidia was so much loved by the people that the major expenses of his son's marriage were borne by the villagers and the village zamindar, Balarama Naik. Six months after his son's marriage, Bidia died a natural death.

Sapna became the night-watchman. But a few days later, he made a petition to relieve him of his night vigil. The village committee became lenient and told him not to keep vigil in all nights.

Sapna and Chemi were an ideal couple. They loved each other dearly, listened to each other's stories and competence and never differed on any issue. They worked together and earned whatever they could, without any grumble. Chemi was adept in laying cow-dung fuel cakes, catching fishes and crabs. She had an expertise in making various folk-dishes, using only a few drops of cooking oil and also in making chaff-cakes. She was very economical, and never demanded anything for her comfort. Her rustic lifestyle, as it were, was twined round Sapna's. During the rains they used to earn more wages, and in the month of *shravana*, Sapna would store *Karanja* (*Pongamia Indica*) oil which would cure all skin ailments.

An old villager, popularly known as Aja Parida fondly addressed Sapna and Chemi as Bagala and Baguli respectively. It soon caught the fancy of the villagers. Even, the village Bhushandapur came to be otherwise known as Bagala-Baguli.

One night, while in bed, the couple after a pleasant discussion, decided to buy a blanket from the Balasore weekly market by selling their surplus grains to a Kabuli Pathan (a merchant of grains). They would share that blanket in winter nights. Thus dreaming of a warm blanket, the couple fell asleep, in no-time, 'know not when'. Next morning they got up late. Chemi was unwell. Sapna had also fever. Chemi in dire distress prayed to her village deity, Budhi Mangala, for Sapna's recovery. On the fifth day, Sapna had a high fever. Chemi was in a quandary what to do next. She had never stepped out alone.

Chemi went to the village quack and brought some ayurvedic medicines on payment of paddy and a silver ring which her mother had given her at her marriage. When she returned from the quack, she found Sapna lying in bed with his mouth wide agape 'O Deity Mangala', she cried, and suddenly collapsed at Sapna's feet.

The villagers could come to know about the fatal end of the couple only after two days. The news caused quite a stir in the village. The villagers exclaimed, "Ah ! such love and virtue even among the lowly people !"

11. PATHOI BOHU (The Educated Bride)

The story 'Pathoi Bohu' was published in June, 1915. Fakirmohan developed this story probably from his own experience while he was at Nilgiri as Dewan. He therefore mentions that the story refers to the remote past. It is a parody on a rich man's daughter's abhorrence of literacy who argues out that formal learning has nothing to do with native intelligence. Fakirmohan mocks the absurdity of such an opinion then held by the orthodox people who maintained a comparatively higher status in the rural society.

The main characters described in this story are a young lawyer residing in Saragadiapada of Balasore town and his newly-wed young wife belonging to a Santal village, Bhalukaposhi in Nilgiri estate. The young lawyer Gopala Patnaik, orphaned at five, lived in the Muktiar settlement in Balasore town with his old widow mother. After his father's death, they had a lot of hardship which Gopal had experienced. He had made a promise to study diligently and strive hard so that he would earn more money and make his mother happy. By dint of his perseverance he became a lawyer. He desired to keep a servant or a maid-servant at home who would do all the household chores so that his old mother would be free from burden. But his mother did not entertain the idea. She thought it sheer extravagance. Instead, her son should save money for the future.

Gopala's mother, Padma kept neighbourly relationship with the *Peskar's* mother, Sita whose elder sister's name was also Padma. They were often found gossipping with each other like two sisters.

Gopala desired to marry an educated girl. But the *Peskar* brought a proposal for a rich man's daughter, Saraswati, aged 15 who was the daughter of Ghanashyama Mahanti of Bhalukaposhi village. Though illiterate, she was exceedingly beautiful. Gopal Babu somehow got reconciled to this proposal. He made a plan to educate his young wife by himself. He initiated her to the learning of Oriya alphabet. Within two months, after regular practice, she could learn to write the first two letters. Six months passed, she could not learn even the third letter and got disinterested. She put forth her argument

that such exercise was of no avail and a sheer wastage of time. She felt she was more intelligent without even vernacular skills.

The story reached its climax when Saraswati noticed that her husband was going out in the evenings and returning late. When asked, Gopala would reply that he was going to the 'Radhe Babaji *Math*' to listen to evening discourses on religious texts organised by the 'Bhaktidayini Sabha'. Saraswati could not make out what it was because of her lack of exposure. She mis-heard it and construed that it was some *Bhagavati Daani* or a bitch named 'Bhagavati - a fallen woman'. The more she mused over it, the more her jealousy grew and overpowered her. She became crazy. She consulted her servant, a barber-boy Arjuna.

The barber-boy who belonged to a village near Dhamara was stupidly cunning. He thought why should he expose his ignorance. He cooked up a story that *Bhagavati Daani* was a beautiful lady, draped in costly ornaments and she excelled in dance. Saraswati intently asked him whether she was wearing a specific gold ornament. *alaka* (usually worn over the brow). A tattler as he was, he immediately confirmed it. Saraswati became almost mad. Her mother-in-law who had died within a fortnight of her marriage, had made her husband Gopal promise-bound to present an *alaka* to her. Now Saraswati convinced herself that the said *alaka* was given as a present to that prostitute by her husband.

In a frenzy she reduced her kitchen to a shambles. She hit her head hard against the floor, it bled. She swooned. Arjuna ran to the *math*. Gopala hastened back to his residence, followed by a motley of people. One among them was an old *puran* reciter, Hari Mishra who was rumoured to have known sorcery. He bragged that he would exorcise the evil spirit and would cure Saraswati. He recited some *mantra* which also contained a reference to *Daani*. Saraswati became terribly scared.

In the meanwhile, the mother of the *Peskar* arrived there. She did not believe in the magic spell, but could know that something had gone wrong somewhere. She closed the door, consoled

Saraswati and made her comfortable, and through her grand-daughter Radhi, could come to know that it was for *Bhagavati Daani* that Saraswati created such a havoc at home.

Gopal now realised to what an extent rusticity and illiteracy could lead. Since it was extremely private, he did not make it public. The crowd dispersed. His wife who bore the name of the goddess of learning, 'Saraswati' now recovered from her trauma. Gopal had to pay to the doctor for treating his and Saraswati's bruises which both of them had sustained.

12. ADHARMA VITTA (Ill-got Money)

The story 'Adharma Vitta' was published in Aug., 1915. It is an unusual story of a perilous river-voyage in the river Mahanadi, from Boudh toward Cuttack during the first spell of monsoon. Fakirmohan's hatred against usurious traders and land-grabbers particularly by the rural *Sahukaras* is quite discernible in most of his stories. Ramachandra Mangaraja (*Chha Mana Atha Guntha*), Nazir Natabara (*Mamu*) and the like are social evils. They represent coercive forces that jeopardize rural economy and domestic felicity.

This story presents a *Sahukara* who trades on his son's marriage. There are a couple of stories by the writer which reflect on bride-price, but this story shows how a father's greed is multiplied while fixing his son's marriage with the lone daughter-cum-heiress of a moneyed business man. The story-teller's antipathy is vindicated through the intervention of Fate or Chance. Fakirmohan had never wished to punish the innocent, except of course, Saria in *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* and 'Rebati'.

'Adharma Vitta' carries some grey impressions of *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* and *Prayaschitta*, particularly in the cast of characters. Lalitadasa Babaji of *Chha Mana* is present here, of course, with restored dignity. Ramachandra Mangaraja's Govindapur village is also evoked here in a different context as the village of Lalitadasa. A sense of worldly detachment as prevailed in

Prayaschitta also has a similar impact on the protagonist in 'Adharma Vitta'.

Fakirmohan's knowledge of the course of the Mahanadi and the topographical details is astounding. From the Gadagadia *ghat* of Cuttack he had reportedly gone up-stream to Dasapalla and Sonepur. He has made use of that experience in this story. This story is probably the first of its kind which describes a long hazardous journey by boat from the upper valley of the Mahanadi down to the east.

The artistic fluidity has not been maimed here by the story-teller's usual moral overtone and exaggeration. His encounter with brahmins at Nilgiri might have been referred to in this story when he describes some brahmins being exploited by the moneylender who respectfully and generously extends loan to them and demands just five to six times more at the time of repayment, obviously knowing that the loanee shall be obliged to forfeit his ownership on the land mortgaged. The narrator also hints at the stupidity and ignorance of brahmins who even shirk their daily practice of *sandhya* and *gayatri*. It is not out of place to mention here that Fakirmohan chose to write a brief manual for the brahmins in 1914, titled *Brahmananam Sandhya Paddhatih*.

He has however respected (without savage humour) peoples' awe for brahmins' wrath. In this story a brahmin curses the greedy moneylender to total ruin within 'three years, three months and three fortnights.' In the story *Punarmushiko Bhava*, a brahmin puts a curse on the 'salt-patrolman'. The coercive system of advancing loan and repayment by rural moneylenders during Fakirmohan's time, was so excruciating that he did not slip off the opportunity of volunteering to translate the rules and regulations of the Credit Cooperative Socieities just a year after the publication of this story.

The story contrives a marriage alliance of Vidyadhara, the son of a moneyed trader, Kubera Sahu of Makramapur village in Moghulbandi with Padmavati, the daughter of a rich trader Judhisthira Sahu of Hariharapur village under the Boudh feudal state. Kubera

tricked one Bhima Sahu of his village and appropriated his property (after Bhima's death) in connivance with lawyers who proved him to be Bhima Sahu's adopted son. He became rich, and exploited the people by advancing generous loans and finally grabbing their land. The story begins with such scenes of exploitation. One Dibakara Dwivedi had to pay more than twelve hundred rupees for a principal loan amount of rupees two hundred. He could not repay, his property worth five or seven thousand was auctioned in favour of the moneylender only at seven hundred rupees.

Yudhisthira Sahu was a rich man. He was simple and honest. His only daughter Padmavati, aged sixteen, got married to Kubera's only son Vidyadhara. Kubera's affected politeness, manners, cajolry and religious chauvinism won over Yudhisthira. Kubera was happy that his daughter-in-law, the sole heiress of her father's property, would ultimately help add to his fortune. He would also expand his business in the Garajat Mahal. The marriage was solemnised in January, in the month of *makara*. The bride and the bridegroom were detained at the bride's place till the month of *asadha*, waiting for the first flood which would be suitable for the rivercrafts to navigate. The return journey commenced on the 10th dark day of the lunar month of *asadha* (June-July). Nearly thirty boats loaded with multiple dowry-stuff were found in the river. The narrator says humorously, 'large boxes with hinged lids for clothes, pestle and mortar, brooms and other domestic needs including tooth-brushes that would suffice for two years were all huddled up in six large boats'. Thousands of spectators were out on the riverbank to have a glimpse of the pageantry.

The river-bed from the Mundapada village to Kaintra *garh* was unsafe as there were many submerged rocks (*bhishma*). Therefore the boatmen were extra-careful. The river Mahanadi was in full spate. A storm followed by a whirlwind rising from the north-west suddenly appeared and blasted all rivercrafts near the Mundapada village, on the opposite side of Shyamapur. At Kaintra *garh* broken wooden planks of boats were found afloat.

A year after this wreck, on the same day of *dasami tithi*, just close to the village Langalakanta, two boats were found fastened to two *kusuma* trees. The river was full. It was midnight. A young man was sitting on the rear deck of one boat in a thoughtful mood. He heard a wailing cry, 'O' mother Ganga. O God, protect my honour.' The silent youth saw a beautiful angel was being chased by a drunken rogue. Lightning flashed. He recognised it was Padmavati. The young man who saved her was Vidyadhara, her husband. Next morning they rowed down to Khalapala village where Padmavati's maternal uncle, Shyama Sahu lived.

There they narrated each other's story. Vidyadhara after the boat-wreck was given shelter by the old Babji Lalitadas of Gobindapur. He stayed there for ten months. Then he came to his village. His house was unwelcome to him. His father and mother had died. He returned all contractual bonds to the loanees and distributed his assets among the people, and fled his home secretly. He boarded the Sonepur-bound boat at Gadagadiaghat with an intention to bid farewell to his father-in-law before going out on pilgrimage. He reached Langalakanta where he met Padmavati.

Padmavati also narrated her grievous story of how she spent her days at Langalakanta in the house of a Good Samaritan, Danei Dalei. The female folk sheltered her. But Danei's son was a rogue. He was trying to outrage her modesty. She finally decided to commit suicide by drowning and on her way to the river-banks, she was caught by the scoundrel again when Vidyadhara rescued her.

The story ends with their warm reception at the house of Yudhisthira Sahu, the father of Padmavati.

13. MADHA MAHANTINKA KANYA SUNA (Madha Mahanti's demand for brideprice)

This story was published in October, 1915. It is written in a humorous vein, and condemns the then social custom of exerting brideprice from ill-matched bridegrooms by daughters' greedy parents. Fakirmohan has criticised such social evil in many of his

writings. Unfortunately there was no legislation in his times to stop this practice which was prevalent mostly in the rural Orissa in the Mughalbandi.

The story exposes a rich old man, Madha Mahanti of Madhupur who became a widower at sixty. He had two daughters, eg Madhavi and Malati. His elder daughter was hardly eight years and six months old, when her father almost sold her to an old man of sixty at a price of seven hundred rupees. Eventually she became widow at eleven and since then, she had never visited her father. Madha Mahanti was also thinking of a second marriage after his wife's death, but stinginess blocked his misadventure.

Madha's second daughter, Malati was rather beautiful. 'A lotus in a dung-pit', the villagers used to refer to her. She was innocent, and ungrudgingly did all household chores. She was fond of a pussy cat. Her miserly father kept her on small rations. Her father was worried about finding out an affluent groom who would volunteer to pay not less than one thousand rupees for such an accomplished and eligible daughter. The villagers were critical about him. Villagers' hatred of Madha Mahanti had made him a recluse.

The story focuses on another interesting character of that village. It was Lachhamandas, a *mahant* of the Gopala Jiu *math*. He was a veritable Judge, Magistrate and moneylender of the village. Village youths used to enjoy his company in each evening where he used to organise various folk entertainments infrequently. The *mahant* was also a hashish-addict. His personal servant and storekeeper was one Binodia Das, a young man of many parts. The *mahant* had full trust in him. He had taken up the responsibility of Binodia's marriage with a suitable bride.

Once some mediators of marriage turned up to Madha Mahanti and gave him a marriage proposal for his daughter with one rich man of Michhupur (meant 'a false or unreal village'). The groom's name was Shri Shri Vinodabihari Gantaghararay (ie. Binodia, the storekeeper, engaged by Mahanta Lachhaman Das in his *math*). Binoda's zamindari fell under the estate, Akashapur (which suggested

the 'Etherial Domain'). They gave some more details about the prospective groom, that he was about sixty-five and his two wives had already died. This bit of information did not have any visible impact on the greedy father. He was happy that he would get the amount as demanded and would spend almost nothing toward marriage expenses. The date of marriage was fixed. Malati felt miserable at her father's instant consent. Should she marry an oldman of sixty-five, a twice widower ? At this juncture, the narrator introduces an old barber widow Padi, a neighbour of Madha. She was a lovable woman. She played a vital role in this story. She assured Malati that she would not marry an old man.

The story finally ends with Malati's marriage with Binodia at the expense of the *mahant* and with the obvious support of the villagers. The greedy father dies a horrible death. Binodia, in course of time, becomes the real zamindar of Gopalpur *taluk*. The narrator adds an epilogue, a moral refrain to the story that 'a miser's savings are of no avail.'

The story loses its grip as it meanders through a farcical encounter towards the end. There are some references to people's engagement in newly laid railway lines, social ostracism, expiatory rituals etc. Some expressions in the story inadvertantly tend towards sensuous imagery which anticipates a new genre of literary style in the offing. An example would suffice. When the mediators of marriage were having dialogues with Madha Mahanti, they noticed through the door-holes 'two still feet, as bright as *champak* blooms'. They saw 'only ten fingers', But when they gave the description of the groom, they heard 'a loud heaving sigh' and 'the two feet suddenly vanished'.

14. GARUDI MANTRA (An Antidote against Snakebite)

This story was published in *Utkala Sahitya* in November, 1916. This is reportedly Fakirmohan's last short story which fulfils all the requisites of a short story. It is pointed and precise. It centres round a single event. The first story 'Rebati', Fakirmohan wrote in 1898 had set a model in Oriya literature and received wide acclaim. It

was published in *Utkala Sahitya* too. 'Rebati' was a tragic song. The dirge is echoing still. The narrator made her a martyr to literacy. His last story, 'Garudi Mantra' is a comic piece, full of fun, and ends with loving acquisition of knowledge. The narrator has not forgotten Padi, the barber-woman about whom he wrote a year before and also the village, Michhupur. They once again surface in his last story for their namesake.

The hero of this story is a collegiate youth, studying in the final F.A. class at Cuttack in 1870s. He is Madanamohan, the son of zamindar Golapalochana Patnaik belonging to Badanai *pargana* under Shalapala *taluk*. Gopalalochana, though uneducated, cherished a hope that his son would get English education. Madana was shy, introvert, reserved and diligent. He dreamt of becoming a graduate. His father arranged accommodation for him at Buxibazar and engaged a cook and a servant for his comfortable stay. His mother, the *saantani* was equally concerned for Madana's education. Madana, besides studying his textbooks, also loved reading novels. The fictional portrayal of heroines warmed up his young fancy.

The story takes a turn when Nabaghana Das, the maternal grandfather of Madana reached him and broke the news of his marriage with Mohini, a fifteen-year-old daughter of zamindar Ramarama Das of Mangalapur. Since Madana was obedient to his father, he could not register his dissent. He left his studies, went home and married Mohini on the *shukla dashami*, the 17th solar day of *makara*.

Madana lived in his manor house. As per the prevalent custom in the aristocratic *Karana* families, the newly-wed couples were seldom found in each other's company during the daytime. The bride would stay in the inner appartment and would be attended to by experienced maids. Mohini was rather a shy girl, and she strictly adhered to the prescribed norms. She was found shielding her visage with a long veil. She would wink like a cat. Padi, an efficient house-maid, kept her company round the clock, and particularly accompanied her each evening in the dark to the secluded grove

nearby, to answer the call of nature. She was the head-maid. There was another maid named, Shukri. She was specially recruited to wait upon the bride in the inner apartment house, and had access both to Madana and Mohini.

Such restrictions; besides, his illiterate young wife's blind adherence to customary ethics pained Madana. How much he wished that both of them would have sweet exchanges and would go out for a stroll in the evening ! He had not feasted his eyes with a full glimpse of his wife even after four months of his marriage. As per the prevailing convention, he would be in his study throughout the day, and would come to the apartment house quite late in the evening. Padi acted as the obstructing block. Madana and Shukri knew it, and after a long parley, they made a stratagem.

Madana rescheduled his timing. He deliberately stayed for longer hours in the study. Padi had no access to Madana's study. Shukri, on being asked, had to enlighten Padi that the young zamindar who was proficient in the *Garudi Mantra*, kept himself busy in curing patients who had been stung by venomous snakes. The village was snake-prone, and particularly the *Chitra Nagas* (spotted serpents) were lethal. Shukri advised Padi to carry a torch while she would be accompanying Mohini outside. Padi was scared of snakes, but did not entertain the idea of carrying a torch, as it would be against the customary practice.

On the same day in the late evening, when Mohini returned from the nearby grove, and entered her room, a serpent stung her. Padi fled the spot. The young zamindar was sent for and he came at once. He spelt out first his methodology of magic healing. He would himself wash the face of the patient with charmed water, untie the chignon, and the patient would keep staring at his face without the veil. Then he would chant some *mantra*. There would be seven sittings in four days. Padi vouched that she had seen the snake which stung Mohini. Mohini was feeling shy, but she had to obey the healer's advice at the insistence of her two maids. The esoteric rite started. Madana mumbled the *mantra* for seven times as follows - *Am. A Cobra was in the*

Kalindi Pond / Krishna went thither for lotus / The cobra stung him / Garuda flew to the place anon / Sucked venom out of the wound/Aa-phoo-aa-phoo-aa-phoo. (trans. by the author) Then he fastend a magic thread round the patient's neck.

The young zamindar succeeded in dispelling the real poison (bashfulness). On the fifth day, Madana advised that 'the charmed thread worn by the patient should be torn off by a widow by her left hand and then leave the place instantly. She would never show up for a period of 'three months, three fortnights and three days.' Unwittingly Padi volunteered. She said, 'It's good that I would leave the place. Who would stay in the snake-infested area ?' Thus, the hurdle was got rid of.

Mohini gradually became intelligent. She acquired more knowledge. She now freely moved in the company of her husband in the flower garden. Once she chided her husband for playing a trick upon her with the help of an artificial snakelike contrivance. Shukri smiled away at the exposure of the gimmick. The story 'Bohu Roga' (A Bride's Infirmity, 1914) is based on a similar theme of rustic consevatism that had forced a new bride to lose her power of speech. The remedy was, however, prescribed by the story writer in 'Garudi Mantra'.

15. KULA KUNTALA

This unfinished story (?) was published in the literary monthly *Utkala Sahitya* in October, 1899. The narrator under the pen-name 'Dhurjati' describes the assemblage of masked *Nagas* or *Jamauts* at Cuttack in different groups. They hang around Bidanasi and Jobra close to the river bank of Mahanadi. All of them happen to be criminal offenders.

The story presents five *Nagas* being ferried in a boat from the opposite side of the river Mahanadi to its southern bank. The *Nagas* were decked in their conventional attire, and had necklaces of *rudrakshas* round their necks. They were found each holding a long forked iron piece and deer skin. When Basua, the chief

oarsman asked for the price of his labour, a *Naga* offered him a *Kurujataka Mohur* (eg a gold coin). Basua thought the *Naga* was a *siddhapurusha* or a realised soul who could materialise the *mohur* from the air. Other oarsmen and helpers taking this cue narrated their similar experiences in the company of other *Nagas* whom they had ferried within a month. The number of the *Nagas* would be around two hundred. The Nagas became happy to learn about the earlier arrival of other *Nagas*. Probably, the narrator knew about the secret expedition of the *Nagas*, who would assemble at Cuttack in the month of *Shravana* when the river was in full spate. The story also informs about the Raja's express order to the boatsmen at the ferry that *Nagas* would not be detained at the ferry. They should be ferried across the river even at the odd hours.

The description of the story does not explain the title, *Kulakuntala*. 'Kula Kuntala' may refer to a young housewife with the most beautiful hair. Had the story been completed the narrator might have involved a brunette in it.

The story, 'Mauna Mauni' (1907) seems to have been an extended version of the story 'Kula Kuntala'.

16. KAVITWA VISARJANA (Abdication of the Art of Versification)

This story containing eleven chapters was serialised from February to June, 1907. This is an ill-humoured story of one Madanamohan Pattnaik, son of *Saanta* Harihara Pattanaik of Hariharapur village under the *pargana* Michhupur. Madana after being successful in his scholarship examination was sent to Cuttack for higher studies in the Entrance Class. The old grandmother wished to see the marriage of her grandson before her death. In the meanwhile, a proposal from the Kanagoi (Kanungo) family of Balianta came. It was entertained by Madana's father as he came to know that the bride would fetch nearly two *batis* of landed property. The

saanta incurred a loan of rupees ten thousand from a moneylender at Cuttack and the marriage was celebrated in a grand manner in the month of *phalguna* (eg February).

The bride however, shocked everybody. She was dark in complexion, rude and ill-bred. Most of the time she indulged herself in scurrilities. Madana's mother was full of tears for her son's fortune.

Madana had to skip his First Arts annual examination which was scheduled to be held on 15th April as his grandmother died on the eve of his examination. Subsequently, his father also died. He was already deep in debt. He had to sell away his mother's ornaments to meet the expenses of the obsequies of his father. He abandoned his studies and remained at home. While he was studying in the Cuttack School, he was participating in the 'Gyanavivarddhini Sabha' organised by the school students. He used to write poems then. Now he resumed writing poems. One of his poems bore the title 'Manava Jivanara Parinama' (The Consequence of Man's Life). He showed the poem to his wife. She ridiculed the sentiments expressed by her husband jn that poem and jeered at him. She also recited a line from a love poem composed in rhymes. Madana was mortified by his wife's remark. He stood down in the dumps for sometime and then swore not to compose poems thereafter. He abdicated his art of versification.

17. BALESWARI RAHAJANI (Burglary in Baleswar)

In July 1907 'Baleswari Rahajani' was published. It describes how burglary was rampant over a long stretch from Midnapore to Bhadrak. Once the British Assistant Manager of Balasore was looted by docoits. All efforts were made by the government to nab the gang. Sarada Prasad Ghosh, the Town Inspector of Balasore Police Station made an attempt to nab the gang of docoits by impersonating himself as a native astrologer. He was assisted by his Sub-Inspector, Rajkishore Chowdhuri. But this decoy did not yield any success. They again impersonated themselves as abscondees from the jail

and became familiar with the gang in the jungle. A day was fixed for a big robbery. The police were kept informed ahead of the actual time of burglary. However, the chief docoits Nalu Mirddha and Baidi Sethi absconded from the place of loot and their co-partners were rounded up and punished. Since then, there was no major occurrence of theft in Balasore.

18. BALESWARI PUNGA LUNA (The Manufacture of crude salt in Baleswar)

'Baleswari Punga Luna', published in September, 1907 was based on salt manufacture and its trade in Balasore by the East India Company and the Crown Government. It is not a story. It is a fact of history and it speaks of Orissa's maritime trade, and how Balasore in those days was a prosperous commercial entrepot. Fakirmohan's father and uncle were involved in the sail-sewing trade, and he himself also had some experience at the quay in his childhood, and later, worked for some time in the Salt Office, Balasore.

19. SUNA NAKACHANA (A gold-top for the nose)

This story was published under the pen name of 'Shri' in *Mukura* in February and March, 1909. It has two small chapters. The story is all about the loss of a gold nose-ornament (red stone-studded nose-top) and its strange retrieval.

The nose-top (ie. *nakachana*) was being worn by a newly-wed bride in the family of *Saanta* Udayanarayana Mahapatra of Gopalapur village. One day, the young bride, before going to take bath in the reserved pond, placed her new nose-top, made from gold on the upper edge of the pond below the *waoo (dillenia speciosa)* tree. After bath, when she reached back the edge, she found the red-topped nose ornament was being carried away by a flying raven. She tried to retrieve it by pelting stones at the crow. Her father-in-law engaged people to locate the raven in the surrounding areas. All crows were virtually chased away from the village.

Five months after, either in the month of *Pausha* or *Magha* in the winter season, while the bride was splitting open a *waoo* fruit, she found her red stone-studded nose-top inside. The news soon spread. Villagers wondered how could the gold ornament (eg *nakachana*) get into the sour fruit ball of *waoo* !

20. PUNARMUSHIKOBHAVA (Be a Rat again)

In 1909, his story 'Punarmushikobhava' in the form of a small novel was published. The writer was a bit nostalgic while he was recapitulating the salt industry in Balasore which was finally closed down some four decades back (actually by 1863). The processed salt imported from Liverpool flooded the market (by 1862-63) and the government banned the salt manufacture by coastal villagers and private individuals. The Salt Department of East India Company recruited many village-level workers to keep watch on illegal salt manufacture. The new system of patrolling was in force from 1849.

The hero of the story was one village barber Kinaram Sing. He was a personal factotum serving the district head clerk. Being clad in official uniform he carried an air of awe, and people in interior villages were afraid of him. In his village office, he appointed Rama Barik as his personal servant. Kinaram, better known in the rural areas as 'police zamadar', started exploiting the people. When his personal servant declined to clean the eating-plates out of fear of losing his caste, he was dismissed. Kinaram wanted somehow to penalise him by falsely intricating him in a legal case that he was making clandestine salt. This case was tried and was proved false. Still then, the people were afraid of Kinaram. Now, the Barber Zamadar became more clever. He did not forward such cases of illegal private manufacture of salt anymore to the government, and collected bribe instead. Somehow, it came to the notice of the government, and Kinaram was caught for his fraudulent means. He was imprisoned for two months. On his release from the prison,

he found it difficult to move about in the society without performing expiatory rituals. He had to pay by his nose. He was reduced to that of a destitute. There was no other way left for him. He had to resume his ancestral profession. He became a village barber again. Kinaram once offended a village brahmin. The brahmin in anger had cursed him, 'Be a Rat again'.

21. RANDI-PUA ANANTA (The Widow's Son)

This story was published in July, 1913 in the literary monthly *Mukura.* Later it was also published in a book-format. The central character of the story is Ananta, son of a buffalo herdsman, Subala Mahakuda alias Subala Singh of Harishapur near the river Bhargavi. The story is developed in different stages. The narator zealously depicts the bravado of Ananta's father who was an adventurous herdsman, living with his herd in the Harishapur forest in an improvised leaf-hut. He was dauntless and a voracious eater. He stunned the Police Inspector by retrieving his hunted fowl from a crocodile-infested swamp, and the police *sahib* was pleased to recruit him as a constable. He was so daring that he once beat a wounded heyna to death, and the magistrate was pleased to promote him to the post of police zamadar. His wife, Devaki was proud of her husband Subala Singh. She was happy when people addressed her as Mrs Seth or Singhani (Mrs Singh). Her hefty masculine appearance earned her a sobriquet, the *Nandighosha* (the gigantic chariot of Lord Jagannatha). Subala Singh died of high fever in the month of *Kartika* when his son, Ananta was only four years old. The story then shifts to Ananta's growing-up to adaulthood in his village.

Ananta combined his father's guts and mother's fierceness and bestiality. He drove the village school teacher mad by his conduct.. He once carried out his savage plan of avenging the teacher for his stern disciplinary action. Ananta became a menace in the village.

The school teacher Baishnab Mohanty had many loopholes. He was a tobacco-addict. He used to engage his students for procuring tobacco.

The narrator presents various sketches of Ananta and his widow old mother. Most of them are ludicrous. The other side of Ananta's character is magnified. He is endowed with enormous physical strength, self-will, insubordination and a spirit of sacrifice.

There occurred a breach in the river embankment of Bhargavi during the *dussera* festival. People were panic-stricken. They could not repair the breach despite their hard labour. Ananta came to know about it. He rushed to the Vinodavihari Temple, unhinged its massive door measuring 7'.6" x 6' and lifted out a *dhinki* (i.e. a long wooden contrivance for separating husks from paddy) that belonged to one Parvati Maa. He then strode menacingly to the breach where the flood water was rushing in. He placed the massive door against the breach and supported it by the *dhinki*. He exerted all his pressure against the inflow of water while raving at the panicky crowd to pile up lumps of earth just close to the door. There was a great hurry and excitement. Ananta was heard shouting at the people to speed up the earth-work. Weird shrieks rent the night sky. People forgot all about Ananta. Lumps of earth were piled up over his head, suffocating him to martyrdom.

Simhani, Ananta's mother (Devaki) heard the commotion. She came to the embankment. People were shouting, 'Glory to Ananta, the Widow's Son'. Even some men lay prostrate at her feet. She went undisturbed to the bathing *ghat* where the breach had occured. She inspected the new mud bank. The water was fifteen feet deep behind the embankment, she did not know. A sudden splash was heard. People saw in the torchlight a frothing eddy and a bamboo staff whirled past at a distance of five cubits from the embankment. The staff was Devaki's, the memento of Ananta's father, Subala Singh.

3.7 Fakirmohan's Novels

1. CHHA MANA ATHA GUNTHA

[*Six Acres and Eight Gunths*]

The Characters

Rama Chandra Mangaraj - A native of Gobindapur village (under Asureswara Pergana) and a deceitful zamindar of Fatepur Sarashandha *taluk*. He masks his greediness and revenge under an appearance of adherence to religion and fake altruism. He lends money on contractual land mortgage. He is married to a virtuous woman and has three adult sons by her. He is in league with his concubine Champa for exploiting the poor villagers.

Mrs Mangaraj or Saantani - Virtuous wife of Ramachandra Mangaraja. Innocent and generous. She pleads with her usurious husband to be merciful to his victims. She keeps cordial relationship with her sons and their wives. The writer compares her to the sacred river Phalgu, where the water flows beneath the surface.

Champa alias Harakala - Aged 30, of unknown parentage. A domestic help but usurps the role of a concubine. She is virtually the surrogate heroine of the novel. A shrewd, crafty woman of easy virtue. She has proficiency in mural painting. The writer compares her to the over-flowing river Charmanvati which houses snakes and crocodiles.

Zamindar Sheikh Dildar Mian - A profligate zamindar of Midnapore. He loves his sybaritic life. He appoints Ramachandra Mangaraj as his rent agent of Fatepur Sarashandha *taluk*, but later loses it in Court auction to the manipulator Mangaraja.

Bhagi Chand alias Bhagia - A native of Gobindapur village, residing in weavers settlement. He is the hereditary headman of his community. A simple, innocent, illiterate, folksy weaver, owner of a consolidated stretch of highly fertile cultivable land measuring six acres and eight *gunths*. He loves his wife Saria dearly.

Saria - Bhagi Chand's devoted wife 'a simple innocent ewe'. Adept in house management, industrious, hospitable and selfless, but foolishness - incarnate. She is overwhelmed with grief due to issuelessness. She dotes on her milch cow "*Neta.*"

Gobara or Gobardhana Jena - The village Chowkidar. Unscrupulous and chummy with burglars. He reports to the local police station every month and gets paid for reporting cases like theft, snakebite and drowning by water. He is also a professional witness.

Manika - A barber-wife in Ratanapur village where the aristocratic zamindar (now in a state of decadence) family of Baghasimha lives. Manika is a blabbermouth and village quack. She brags of her knowledge in sorcery, mid-wifery and herbal medicines.

Babaji Lalitadas - A Vaishnav, supposed to have come from Puri to Mangaraja's village for a week soon after Mangaraj is arrested. He is found to be a seducer.

Marua - A youthful child-widow of Puri taking shelter in Mangaraja's house alongwith many other maid-servants over last ten years. At seven she was married to a 64-year old asthmatic patient. She shows her weakness for Lalitadas Babaji.

Sheikh Inayet Hussain - A corrupt police Daroga of Cuttack who institutes a murder case against Ramachandra Mangaraj.

Munshi Chakradhar Dash - Clerk in the police office in Kendrapara.

Ram Ram Lala - A shrewd lawyer in the Cuttack Bar. He handles the brief of accused Mangaraja.

Isan Chandra Sarkar - Government Pleader.

ABCD Duglas - Civil Surgeon, Cuttack. He is said to have studied medical science in London, and has a ten-year experience. He was a medical assistant. During the war in Burma, he was promoted to the post of Civil Surgeon. He examines Saria's dead body and submits his post-mortem report in the Sessions Court.

H.R. Jackson - Sessions Judge, Cuttack

3.6.5. *The Story*

The story is set in rural Orissa, in the village Gobindapur under Asureswar *pargana* in Cuttack district. It presents the protagonist

Ramachandra Mangaraja, a rapacious and usurious rural zamindar who rose from stark poverty having no honourable family background. He was orphaned at seven and started begging from door to door. He could muster courage to avenge his destitution by resorting to Mephistophelian ways and means. He could influence the zamindar Sheikh Dildar Mian in Midnapore and got himself appointed as his rent-collector of the estate Fatepur Sarashandha. He did not submit the revenue in time to Dildar on the plea that the ryots and land-owners were not paying the rent under the malign influence of the Baghasimha family of Ratanpur village. Fatepur Sarashandha comprised five villages, Mangaraja's village, Gobindapur being one of them. The zamindar of Midnapore fell a prey to Mangaraja and lost his estate to him in a Court auction.

Mangaraja gradually rose to power and amassed wealth. He became ambitious and greedy, and styled himself as a wealthy rural banker in a radius of twenty square miles. Though married to a virtuous woman, he did not hesitate to maintain a harem where a host of destitute women took shelter. He was a visitor to the redlight area of Cuttack town.

The writer does not hesitate to make use of a series of banters and innuendoes while introducing the protagonist of his story with regard to his religious exhibitionism, particularly, his observance of *ekadasi* (a prescribed Hindu day of fasting).

Outwardly religious, Ramachandra's crookedness, became more manifest in his secret companionship with Champa, a maid in his mansion. Fakirmohan has endowed Champa with a sinister presence. Her physique, gait, and betel-crimsoned lips created a murmur in the village. Her secret counselling to Ramachandra proved her a repulsive villain. She overshadowed the mistress of the house and kept a tight rein on Ramachandra.

In Ramachandra's village there lived an innocent couple, Bhagia and Saria in the weavers' settlement. Bhagia was the headman of his community. He was innocent, illiterate and foolish. His crest-fallen

barren wife, Saria was equally simple, innocent and credulous. She was doting on her pet milch cow *Neta* and looked upon it as her own child. Unfortunately they inherited a stretch of tax-free fertile land measuring six acres and eight *gunths* close to the fields of Ramachandra Mangaraja, which eventually brought about their ruin. It engendered in Ramachandra Mangaraja the land-grabbing greed and eventually brought about total ruin of the weaver couple as also of the usurper himself.

The satanic role in the novel is played by Champa. She in queer alacrity could read Ramachandra's mind, and volunteered to help him achieve the coveted land by hook or by crook. She devised a stratagem to beguile innocent Saria. She knew how Saria was eager to beget a child. Sterility was a curse to her which, she thought, could be cured by divine intervention. Champa thought of *Budhi Mangala*, the village deity on whom the rural folk reposed all their faith. Saria fell an easy prey to her machination. Champa persuaded her to mortgage that patch of land on a six-month contract to the moneylender - zamindar and build a big temple comparable to that of Baladev Jew of Kendrapara for the deity Mangala. She assured her that the deity would be propitiated and the devout Saria would be blest with three sons.

A plot was made so that a bribed village guy impersonating the Deity did commune with Saria in cognito, and gave her blessing. Saria was doubly assured that she was on the threshold of maternal felicity.

Ramachandra and his concubine could succeed in duping the couple. After the expiry of six months, Ramachandra produced a fake Court order and put Saria's house on auction to meet the Court expenses. The couple was driven out of their homestead and Ramachandra took possession of their house and the cow *Neta*. Later, he demolished Saria's house. The husband and wife moved about in the locality as living apparitions. Bhagia became mad and Saria in a mad frenzy frequented Ramachandra's villa bewailing *Neta, Neta*.

The story has another dimension. Ramachandra's ambition soared high. Now he chalked out his second plan how to crush the neighbouring zamindar's pride. Next to his village, there was the famous zamindar family of the Baghasinghas. They had been real aristocratic zamindars in the past, of course, but were now in a state of decadence. But they were respected by all. The villagers of Ratanpur looked down upon the despicable zamindar of Gobindapur, Ramachandra Mangaraja who framed charges against many poor people including a band of local Doms and put them to prison. Ramachandra was planning how to crush the influence of the Baghasimha family. There came Champa instantly hatching an innovative plan which was by all intent dangerous.

She was carried in a palanquin to Ratanpur village on the *Snana yatra* day (a day before the Chariot Festival) in hot summer in guise of *mausi* or aunt to the newly-wed bride of the youngest member of the Baghasingha family. In her entourage there were four male carriers who carried lavish presents, and a barber attendant also followed Champa. After ascertaining that no male members would be available, as all of them had gone away to witness the festival at Kendrapara, Champa alias Tangi Mausi timed her maiden visit to the Baghasimha family. Before Champa introduced herself, the village gossip, Mania heralded the advent of Tangi *mausi,* the imperious aunt from Dalijoda. She came, saw and conquered. Champa had an exchange of pleasantries with the elder women folk of the family. The new bride was flabbergasted. She never knew her, and when she tried to have a full glimpse of the uninvited strange aunt, she was prevailed upon not to unveil her face as the custom would demand. After a while, Champa desired to answer the call of nature in a secluded place behind the main house and did not allow a maid close at her heels. She went there surreptitiously and put fire into the thatches which started burning slowly. It was dusk hour. She hurriedly took leave of them, promising them that on her return from Kendrapara she would stay with them for a couple of days alongwith other male relatives.

The house of Baghasimha family soon caught fire, and by midnight it was reduced to ashes. Thus, Ramachandra's second design to avenge his rival became successful. The ascent and decline of the protagonist or anti-hero of the novel has been evenly handled by the novelist.

The inconsolable Saria frequented the villa of Ramachandra Mangaraja, piteously craving for Mangaraja's mercy. She pleaded for her land and her favourite pet *Neta.* She had no food to eat for weeks. Her husband had been driven to madness. Mangaraja's virtuous wife pleaded many a time to her cruel husband to dispense justice to Bhagia and Saria, which was ruthlessly turned down. Champa made discourteous comments on the mistress of the house showing her goodness as knave magnanimity. On the *Radhashtami* day in the lunar month of *Shravana*, Mangaraja's wife died near the holy basil plant in the courtyard. The maid servant Marua broke the news. A few days hence, the dead body of Saria was also traced and retrieved from the rear precincts of Mangaraja's house, shrouded in a ragged mat.

The novel takes a different twist from now on. Gobara Jena, the chowkidar who was subservient to zamindar Ramachandra Mangaraja lodged an FIR against him accusing him as the murderer of Saria, at the Kendrapara police station. The Munshi and Daroga came to the spot, examined witnesses and forwarded the case to the Magistrate, Cuttack on 10.10.1831. Mangaraja was remanded to the police custody as an undertrial prisoner till May 17, 1832. One Ram Ram Lala, a cunning lawyer introduced himself to the captive Ramachandra and forced him to mortgage his estate Fatepur Sarshandha to him for pleading the criminal case. The hearing continued for five days. Finally, the Court did not take cognizance of Ramachandra's direct involvement in the murder case as the post-mortem report submitted by A.B.C.D. Duglas, Civil Surgeon, Cuttack showed no injury on the dead body. Mr. H.R. Jackson, the Sessions Judge in his final verdict awarded Ramachandra Mangaraja, the erstwhile zamindar of Govindapur six months rigorous imprisonment

and a fine of rupees five hundred. The verdict was dated 17th May, 1832. His lawyer Ram Ram Lala saw him off in the Court room and assured him of release by the Supreme Court. Gobara Jena, the village chowkidar was also awarded one year rigorous imprisonment for giving false and fabricated evidence. The Judge opined that Saria died of starvation and of acute mental anguish. Ramachandra's crime, however, lay only in putting Saria's house on auction illegally and taking possession of her cow *Neta* which was not mentioned in the seizure list. The writer with tongue-in-cheek surmised it as a travesty of justice.

The story does not end here. When Ramachandra Mangaraj was arrested, Champa managed to obtain the key to the treasury from him. She conspired with Gobinda Barik and secretely left Mangaraja's villa with him carrying all cash and jewellery while the zamindar was in police custody.

The barber-servant Gobinda demanded a share of the loot which she carried. They reached a way-side sloppy shop owned by Gopi Sahu in the evening. They decided to stay there overnight, and would approach the ferry next morning to cross the river Birupa. In the dead of night, the disgruntled Gobinda cut Champa's throat by his sharp razor and took possession of the treasure, hid under Champa's pillow. Before daybreak, he rushed to the nearest Gopalpur ferry on the bank of the Birupa river and coaxed the boatman to untie his boat so that he could go to the other side of the river. The boatman was suspicious about the stranger and while his boat was half way through, the day broke, and the boatman spotted blood stains on Govinda's clothes. He started questioning him. In the meanwhile, a postal peon was sighted on the otherside of the river. Govinda was scared, and jumped into the river, only to be devoured by a crocodile. The local police seized the unidentified corpse of Champa which was surmised to be that of a pilgrim of western India. The dead body was thrown to the river which the boatman Chandia Behera saw being devoured by a crocodile on the same spot of the river where the stranger Govinda had been devoured earlier. The Gopalpur

ferry became a dreaded place. It was abandoned, and it earned a sobriquet of *Petunipada* or a haunted place.

The villa of Ramachandra Mangaraja slowly fell to ruins. His homestead was put to auction on the village lane. His *taluk* or estate was made over to the lawyer Ram Ram Lala who was to take possession of it on the day of *Makara Samkranti* (eg 14th January).

Babaji Lalitadas was sighted in Mangaraja's village. He sojourned in Gobindapur village for a week and eloped with the youthful maidservant, Marua.

Bhagia became maniacal. He was found raving about his six acres and eight *gunths* and frolicking on the street. He was arrested by the police and put into jail, as there was no asylum in Orissa then. It so happened, Mangaraja, Chowkidar Gobara Jena and six other witnesses of Govindapur and Ratanpur shared the same cell in the Cuttack Jail. Bhagia staying in another cell somehow got loose and bit off Mangaraja's nose. The Dom convicts in the jail who had been once wronged by Mangaraja, also got an upper hand to humiliate him.

Gobara Jena bearing the prison tag No.977 was found dead on account of severe physical assault by co-prisoners. Ramachandra Mangaraja bearing the prison tag No.957 was equally assaulted and had little hope of survival. He was let off on the ground of mercy, but his sons and kith and kin did not turn up to escort him home. He was carried home by an old servant, and kept under the treatment of a village quack. He was made to lie on a tattered rug close to the basil plant in the courtyard, exactly at the same place where his wife had succumbed. Often during paroxysms he was heard howling *tha- maa-aa-gu* (eg an abbreviation of "*six acres and eight gunths*"). He had often a hallucinatory vision of the weaver woman Saria turned to an obnoxious vampire who was demanding her ancestral land. Then he saw a myriad of skeletal Bhagia-s (eg Saria's husband) under arms, emerging from yonder the dark clouds and rushing to hammer his head. In utter dread and desertion he wanted to cry out for help. But alas, he had no strength left to articulate.

He then saw a resplendent blissful female image seated on a jewelled throne high above the solar orb who was beckoning to him. It was of none other than his endearing wife. The soul of Mangaraja took a flight toward her. There rose an uneasy stir in the mansion of Mangaraja.

Critical Opinion

The story of *Six Acres and Eight Gunths* is cast on the backdrop of Orissa's socio-economic history from 1801 to 1840. It is a stark social tragedy interlaced with seven deaths, eg Champa and Gobinda Barik, Bhagia and Saria, Mrs. Mangaraja and Ram Chandra Mangaraja and Gobara Jena.

While Fakirmohan was in Cuttack from 1896 to 1905, he picked up intimacy with Biswanath Kar, the editor of *Utkala Sahitya*, an Oriya literary monthly. He found the widely circulated magazine a comfortable medium where he could present a veritable cross section of the rural society of Orissa of his times. He serialised this novel in that magazine from the 10th issue of the first volume (Oct., 1897) to the 7th issue of the third volume (July 1899). The serialised features were published under the pen name, 'Dhurjati'. Three years after, it was published in a book form in 1902. Its second edition was also released in 1916. When the novel was being serialised, the readers were taken aback, shocked and their enthusiasm rose to a great extent. They felt that the Court-case against the protagonist was a real one. People from distant villages rushed to Cuttack to witness the trial of Ramachandra Mangaraja.

Even inquisitive scholars are now searching for the source materials which are half-hidden in Fakirmohan's historical sense and creative imagination. Someone alludes the stretch of land of six acres and eight *gunths* to a zamindar in Kendrapara who purchased it from a weaver for his own office. Some also try to draw analogies from land-related exploitations of the period Fakirmohan lived.

The excellence of the novel rests on the writer's narrative skill, intertextuality, authorial intrusion into the text, pervasive humour and irony, and above all, use of diction. His in-built literary mechanism

of banter against the exploitory colonial administration, the British legal system, the corrupt officials and hypocritic religious practices is more pronounced. The following extract shows how the writer was bitter about the colonial administration in his chapter "Asura Dighi" (eg A Village Pond) :

"About a score or more of white herons would be seen scouring the mud-belts close to the banks of this tank, right from dawn up to nightfall in desperate efforts at getting their meagre daily fill of small fry. But behold, how a couple of cormorants flew down from nowhere and, after having bellyfulls of large fish with only a few dives into the depths of the tank, flew away, over-satisfied. A cormorant would even be seen now on the high bank, spreading its wings in the sun in excellent contentment, as memsahibs do in their evening gowns, on the eve of a party. Oh ye humble herons of India, see how the English cormorants fly across distant seas to our land and return gleefully, with their erstwhile empty pockets filled with excellent fish, while you fools, who live on the boughs of trees standing close to this tank, fail to get more than a few of the small fry after hard day-long struggles. A bitter war of existence is on now. You may expect more and more cormorants flying thither very soon. They might eat all the fish in the tank. If you are keen on your own survival, you had better behave like those cormorants. You have to learn how to swim the seas. I do not know else, in future, you could even keep body and soul together." (Courtesy - Mayadhar Mansinha, *Fakirmohan Senapati*, pp.63-64).

Fakirmohan's incorrigible irony is interlaced in the novel as follows -

'Unpleasant truths are better left unspoken.' 'It tells the truth by denying the truth.' 'For intelligent poeple, hints usually suffice.'

Referring to Col. James Tod's comment on the painting of a nude woman - 'all women in ancient India went about naked.'

'English Culture is rushing in like the first floods of the river Mahanadi.' 'Cows chew their cud like Vaishnavas repeating their divine names.' 'Water lilies fold themselves up during the day like young Hindu daughters-in-law.' 'Historians say it took Clive less time to get the Bengal *subedari* from the Emperor of Delhi than it takes one to buy and sell a donkey', etc.

The novel also partly breathes both symbolic and philosophical nuances with regard to the nomenclature of places and the characters, inner musings of Saria and Mangaraja's wife, and the writer's interliterariness and robust historical sense. His use of saws, aphorisms and proverbs and contrived inputs have been designed for making the novel a retributive one.

It may be pointed out here that Lal Behari Dey's book *Govinda Samanta* or *The History of Bengal Peasant* (1874), retitled as *Bengal Peasant Life* (1878) which Fakirmohan had read, might have influenced Fakirmohan's writing of *Chha Mana Atha Guntha.*

2. LACHHAMA

The Characters

Samantaray Raghab Ratsingh Bairiganjan Mandhata - He holds Raibania Fort at Jaleswar, Balasore. Well built, adept in conventional weaponry and horse-riding. Mandhata is wealthy, issueless and devoted to his wife. He represents Orissa's militia and heroic chivalry.

Mahadevi - Mandhata's wife, motherly, lover of birds, religious and devoted to *Gada Chandi.*

Hazarat Subadar (Nawab) Aliverdi Khan - Subadar and Nawab of Bengal-Bihar-Orissa (1740). The main character in the story.

Fauzdar Bhaskara Pandit or Bhaskara Ram - A Maratha General stationed at Balasore. He was sent by Maratha-chief

Raghuji Bhonsla to win over Bairiganjan Mandhata who holds the Raibania Fort. Expert in pitched battles and guerilla warfare, Bhaskara Pandit was murdered at Manokar by *Havildar* Badal Singh and betel-seller Lachhama in 1744, on the eve of signing an agreement with the Nawab Aliverdi Khan for a ransom of rupees one crore.

Fauzdar Kutlu Khan - Officer in charge of Balasore Port who fled to Keonjhar forest for fear of Maratha atrocity.

General Mir Habib - Posted at Midnapur to obstruct the Maratha belligerence. He betrays Aliverdi and joins the Maratha camp.

Lachhama - Aged 30, tall, well-built, dressed in costly attires, a victim of Godikhala burglary. She belongs to Simhana village in the district of Rohilakhand, *Kshatriya* by caste and daughter of Dheunkal Singh, a Zamindar. She is the only daughter and heiress, and lives with her husband in her father's house. After the harrowing debacle, she appears in the novel as a *panara* or betel-seller in male attire.

Pandit Sheo Shankar Malavir - A Maharastrian brahmin ('an uncommon merchant of scriptures'), well-versed in Sanskrit and Indian philosophy. An experienced emissary of the Bhonsla of Nagpur.

Sheikh Mir Kasim - Succeeds Kutlu Khan as Nawab, Balasore Fort. On receipt of Aliverdi's message in the village Soso, he approaches Mandhata for help.

Rayaguru Banamali Vachaspati, Purohit Purushottama Rath, Dalabehera Gopal Mattagaja - Courtiers of Bairiganjana Mandhata.

Badal Singh - Son of late Haribhajan Singh and Shyama Bai of Punjab and husband of Lachhama. He was segregated from his family at an encounter with the marauding *bergees* at Godikhala. He once saved the life of Aliverdi who was pleased to appoint him as *Havildar* in his army. One of his ears was cut off during an encounter. He is better known as *Kanakata* Badal.

Mother of Jaga Fate Singh - A quarrelsome and garrulous old widow of Madhupur. She is a gossip-monger and denies shelter to Lachhama.

Fauzdar Nauji Rao - Appointed as Fauzdar in the south by the King of Berar.

Bergee Man-Subedar Lachhamanji - Fought with General Mirzafer at Arada and defeated him.

General Mirzafer - The foremost General of Aliverdi, seriously injured at the Haladipada battle.

Dewan Janakiram - Dewan of Burddhaman (Burdwan) who acts as Aliverdi's emissary to Bhaskara Pandit.

Balaji Rao Holker - Signed an agreement with the Nawab Aliverdi and received rupees one crore as ransom.

The Story :

Lachhama is a full-fledged historical novel with a queer mix of the author's romantic imagination and the spirit of adventurism. The fiction refers to a period of Orissa's history from 1740 till the Maratha conquest in 1751.

The story is set in various places from Balasore to Murshidabad. It begins with a pilgrimage of some devotees coming from the north-west (*paschima yatri*) to Puri. They were sighted on the southern side of the river Suvarnarekha, on the grand road, near about Godikhala Inn, while the sun was almost setting down. There were three women and five men, mounted on their respective ponies. They were escorted by armed guards. They were suddenly attacked by armed burglars - the Maratha horsemen, who had earned a sobriquet, the *bergees*. The Puri-bound pilgrims were completely routed, and those who survived, fled in different directions in the ensuing dark.

The Fort of Raibania, the impenetrable and well-garrisoned historic castle of Orissa, held by Samantaray Raghava Ratsing Bairiganjana Mandhata, whose alliance was coveted both by the Muslims and Marathas, lay at a considerable distance from

Godikhala where this unfortunate incident occurred. It was the period of Orissa's decline. Road-connectivity was extremely poor. It took even two to three years to reach Puri from Kasi on foot. When Aliverdi Khan became the Nawab of Bengal-Bihar-Orissa, the plight of the people of Orissa and Bihar was at its peak. The frequent attack of *bergees* created panic among the people of Orissa.

One of the survivors of Godikhala *rahajani* was a young woman of thirty, named Lachhama who was found approaching the Raibania Fort, probably for protection and shelter. The Godikhala incident had already stupefied her. She could not organize her thoughts. She was however, taken in, and the issueless *Rani* Mahadevi looked after her as her daughter.

The Marathas had an eye on Orissa, a decade before their actual conquest. They were making alliances with various chiefs of Orissa. Dasapalla, Banki, Tigiria and Nilgiri estates had already entered into agreements with the Maratha Chief of Berar. When Lachhama was taking shelter in Raibania Fort, the Maratha emissary, Pandit Sheo Shankar Malavira called on the Khandayat Chief Mandhata and proposed an alliance which would help the Bhonsla of Nagpur to fight against the Muslim Nawab, Aliverdi Khan. The proposal was disapproved of by Mandhata's *Rayaguru* Banamali Vachaspati, *Purohita* Purushottama Rath and *Dalabehera* Gopala Mattagaja and ultimately by the *Khandayat* chief Mandhata himself. The learned diplomat, Sheo Shankar made some objectionable remark on the valour of Oriya *Paiks*. He said, Oriya paiks were adept in using solid bamboo sticks and cudgels only as weapons in warfare. His rhetoric infuriated the *Khandayats*. The mission of the emissary ended in a fiasco. The recent burglary and attack on pilgrims and tourists coming from far-off places to Orissa had already revealed the Maratha's sinister design. Fauzadar Bhaskara Pandit, then stationed at Balasore, had probably a hand in such carnage.

Nawab Aliverdi Khan was in a real mess. He defaulted in payment of his *subah* dues to Mahammadsa Badsha. Maratha

Peshwa Balaji Rao was to be paid his *chauth* (one-fourth of revenue collected from Bihar). The *paiks* in his army were to be given their salaries. His General, Mir Habib, who was posted at Midnapur to foil the advance of the Marathas, was no more loyal to him. He had joined the Maratha side. Bhaskara Pandit was hurling out his threat at him at Balasore. Fauzdar Kutlu Khan who was posted at Balasore had already fled. The *paiks* in Balasore who had extended their support to the *Subadar* had also deserted him long since.

There was panic everywhere. Mir Kasim who was to succeed Kutlu Khan at Balasore Port, was found conferring with Muslim soldiers in the Soso tribal hamlet of Keonjhar. Burglars in guise of Naga-*sadhus* were reportedly ransacking villages in the border areas. Sheik Samsar Khan, *Mansadar* in guise of a *Mahant*, brought a signed letter from the Nawab and handed over to Mir Kasim. The purport of the letter was to teach a lesson to Bhaskara Pandit with assistance from Mandhata of Raibania Fort. The consolidated power would attack Bhaskara's army on the 3rd day after the *Id*.

Thus, the novel describes a series of battles between Aliverdi and Bhaskara Pandit. They fought at Haladipada, Phulwara, Rajghat, Mahisarekha and Katoya. The Nawab met debacles in each battle. The Marathas attacked Raibania Fort and captured Mandhata who put up a brave but futile fight. The *Rani* committed suicide. Before the seize of the fort, the *Rani* could sense the impending attack. She sent away Lachhama secretly. Mandhata became a martyr in his fort. Rayaguru Banamali Vachaspati was let off, as Mandhata took up the entire blame on him.

The novel takes a dramatic turn hereafter. Lachhama after leaving the Fort, crossed the river Suvarnarekha and came to a *paik* village, Madhumalla Kanthi or Madhupur where she encountered a garrulous old widow, the mother of Jaga Fatesingh. She moved here and there for shelter. For the last four days she did not have a morsel of food, though Mandhata's queen had given her some victuals and gold *muhars*. While taking rest in a nearby temple, she had a dream of her husband seated on a bejewelled throne. She

made a pledge that the rest of her life she would devote her time in quest of her husband, and avenge her parents' death.

Lachhama hid her female attire and in the deportment of a male *panara* or betel-seller she started moving about in the army cantonment of the Marathas. Nobody suspected her.

Lachhama's husband, Badal Singh had similarly made a pledge by swearing in the name of his presiding deity, *Ekalinga* to take revenge on Bhaskara Pandit, the chief of *bergees* who had ruined his family at Godikhala. A fight between Aliverdi and Bhaskar Pandit took place in the village Mahisharekha on the bank of the river Damodara, where, by his skilled archery, he saved the life of the Nawab. The Nawab commended his courage and skill, and appointed him as *Havildar*, and he was allowed to keep a retinue of one thousand *paiks*. Badal had lost one of his ears in the battle. He was often addressed as *Kanakata* Badal or one-ear-severed Badal.

While the two enemy chiefs were camping at Katoya, both of them seriously entertained the prospect of a truce. Aliverdi had already made an agreement with Holker Balaji Rao at Murshidabad and paid rupees one crore through his deputed pleader. Janakiram, the Nawab of Burddhaman (Burdwan) and an ally of Aliverdi Khan, advanced the proposed agreement with Bhaskara Pandit. As agreed upon, both the rival leaders would meet at Manokar, a place between Murshidabad and Katoya, in the special camp of Aliverdi in the morning, on Saturday in the dark fortnight of *shravana trutiya tithi*.

The proposed agreement provided an opportunity to Badal Singh, the *Havildar* of Aliverdi and also to Lachhama, the betel-seller roaming about in the camp of Maratha soldiers. Till then, they did not know each other. Lachhama succeeded to accompany Bhaskara Pandit as a horse-keeper. The moment Bhaskara Pandit was ushered to Aliverdi's camp for signing an agreement in exchange of rupees one crore, Badal and Lalchhama pounced upon him with their daggers from both sides. Bhaskara Pandit was beheaded in a jiffy. In the ensuing encounter Janakiram and *Mansabdar* Sardar Khan were found butchered by Maratha soldiers.

The Nawab was graciously pleased to reward his *Havildar* Badal Singh and the strange youth who shared the murder of Bhaskar Pandit. The Nawab conferred the title of *Raja* on Badal and awarded taxfree Banabishnupur *pargana* in Midnapore district to him. When asked, the unknown youth prayed for his sister's marriage with the *Havildar*. The strange youth (Lachhama) surprised the Nawab. Badal refused to accept the proposal as he was already married and was still keeping alive his search for his missing wife. The next morning, Badal absconded and no one could know where he went. Lachhama remained indoors and could not come out for four days, and finally, left Murshidabad on the fifth day of Bhaskara Pandit's murder.

Lachhama and Badal met at Gaya when both of them were offering ablutions in the sacred memory of the departed souls of their parents. They also were united there with their old mothers.

Badal became the Raja of Banabishnupur and his queen Lachhama was honoured with the ownership of Raibania Fort.

Critical Opinion

Lachhama is the only successful historical novel in Oriya with the author's unrestrained creative imagination. Fakirmohan built this novel on the skeletal canvass of history, added his imagination to the plot and embellished lively characters. The chapter IX which describes the tribal village of Soso, on the eastern wooded border of Keonjhar, is indeed, a piece of poetry. His literary successor, Gopinath Mohanty, it seems, might have been greatly influenced by Fakirmohan in his magnum opus, *Paraja*. The notes of cuckoo which reverberate in this small woodbine tribal hamlet, as described by Fakirmohan, make the landscape really sensuous. The novel, in other words is a tribute to his native district, Balasore, nay, to Orissa, his motherland which still houses the ruins of the historical fort. John Beames has given a detailed description of the ruins of the fort in his article, "The Jungle Forts of Northern Orissa", published in *The Indian Antiquary*, 1872.

Unlike his other novels, Fakirmohan's use of language in this novel has often become archaic and ornate. Probably it so necessitated as he was rewriting the history and recapitulating events of the past.

Eminent critics like Gaganendranath Dash and Ramachandra Nayak while probing into *Lachhama's* source materials refer it to the historical text, *Siyar-ul-Mutakherin,* written in Persian by Hussain Tawatbai. The book was translated into English in 1789 by Nota Manus. Dash further opines that John Beames' essay on *The Jungle Fort of Northern Orissa* and Bankim Chandra's novels, eg *Durgeshanandini*, *Indira, Rajsimha, Anandamatha* and *Devi Choudhurani* might have cast some shade on the theme and structure of *Lachhama.*

The supposedly lost story 'Lachhamania' of Fakirmohan has probably no link with *Lachhama*, which happens to be the second fiction of Fakirmohan. This fiction was serialised in *Utkala Sahitya* from June, 1901 to July, 1903 under the title *Apurva Milana,* (A strange meet), but when it was published in 1914 carrying 43 chapters, it had the title, *Lachhama*. Fakirmohan was happy to see its Hindi translation by Mukutadhara Pande and Muralidhara Pande published in 1916.

3. MAMU

[*The Maternal Uncle*]

The Characters

Dasarathi Das - A *Mohurir* in the Collectorate, Cuttack. He belongs to Rukunadeipur under Sumada *pargana* near Jagatsinghpur. Now he stays in Dargha Bazar, Cuttack. His family comprises his wife, two sons and matron Saraswati Dei.

He was earlier working as *Chhamu Karana* or superintendent in the Naripur *garh,* under the zamindar family of Uttararay. He became Nazir when his daughter, Chandamani was born. He took voluntary retirement and got his son appointed as Nazir. He died of blood vomiting in the village.

Menaka Dei - Wife of Dasarathi Das and mother of Banabara, Nazir Natabar and Chandamani.

Chandamani - Only daughter of Nazir Dasarathi Das, married at 15 to Pratapa Udita Malla Uttararay of Naripur *killa*. She becomes widow after the birth of her two sons. She has rarely surfaced in the novel.

Nazir Natabar Das - Son of Dasarathi Das. Passed Entrance Examination alongwith Pratapa Udita and his cousin Pitambara. Married to Visakha, daughter of Chhakadi Patnaik and Mangala Dei of village Asuragadia under Harishapur *killa*. He becomes Nazir and a regent to Tikkayat Narahari, son of Chandamani. He steals money and jewellery of his sister. He is accused of misappropriation of government cash, gets jailed, and is finally acquitted. He is addicted to drinks, and keeps objectionable relationship with his maidservant Chitrakala.

Visakha alias Biski - The foolish wife of Natabara, given to luxury. She is blind to her brother's lapses.

Pratapa Udita Malla Uttararaya - Young benevolent zamindar of Naripur *killa*, husband of Chandamani and father of Tikkayat Harahari and Srihari.

Tikkayat Narahari Uttararay - Better known as Naru Babu, the eldest son of Pratapa Udita and Chandamani. He is the nephew of Nazir Natabara.

Peskar *Mausa* - A distant, benevolent uncle or *mausa* of Narahari. He is well aware of Natabara's villainy and hypocrisy. He works as *Peskar* in the Cuttack Collectorate.

Gelhei - A young village woman who lost her husband and kith and kin when cholera broke out. She is cordial to all villagers. She acts as a mid-wife and a quack in the village. She does not tolerate other's false bravado. She spends her time with her pussy cat. She is a chaste woman and virtually uncocerned in the thematic development of the novel.

Chitrakala alias Lalita - A fashionable young lady working as maid-servant in Nazir Natabara's house. She strategically keeps

the Nazir under her control. She is in league with Prabhudayal Bhagat, a domiciled Bihari debauch and assists theft from the iron chest of the Nazir. She is known in Chandamani's house as Lalita.

Nakaphodia Maa - A garrulous old woman of Cuttack town. She is clever enough 'to extract sap even from a piece of rock.' She is adept in hairdressing and for sometime becomes Visakha's favourite. She stays in the out-house of Nandakishore Babū in Sahazada Bazar.

Saraswati Dei - An accomplished intelligent matron in the house of Dasarathi Das. She is the wife of an abscondee. She happens to be the cousin of Menaka Dei. Chandamani addresses her as *Dhai-maa*. Saraswati also accompanies Chandamani as her chaperon and stays with her in the Naripur *killa*.

Mr. Dawson - Collector, Cuttack - an experienced government official. He has a special liking for the Nazir. He goes home (England) on furlough. By the fabricated tale of Natabara, he frees the Naripur estate from its coming under the Court of Wards, and officially appoints Natabara as the regent of Tikkayat Narahari.

Mr. W. Jones - Officiating Collector, and Joint Magistrate, Cuttack who gives his final verdict on the criminal case, filed against Nazir Natabara.

Sadhu Sahu - A rich oil man in Naripur. He is a moneylender. He lends money and grains to Saraswati Dei for the maintenance of Uttararaya's family.

Raghab alias Raghua Mohanty - Brother-in-law of Nazir Natabara. He is a simpleton, but when comes under the influence of a Bihari *dalal*, Prabhudayal Bhagat, he is transformed to a debauch and rogue. He steals the government cash from Nazir's house-treasury.

Prabhudayal Bhagat - A domiciled Bihari youth, half-educated, discourteous and extravagant. He loves music. He is looked down upon in his community for his contact with a lowly woman. He is very inquisitive, and noses out other's lapses. He

picks up friendship with Raghab Mohanty and becomes the god-brother of Chitrakala. He connives at the stealing of government cash by Raghaba, kept by Nazir Natabara in his house. When the criminal case is instituted against the Nazir, Prabhudayal absconds.

The Story

The novel is set in three places — the Cuttack town, a rural *killa* Naripur belonging to the Uttararaya zamindar family and a village, Rukunadeipur. The main protagonist was Nazir Natabara, son of Dasarathi Das who worked in the past as Superintendent in Uttararaya's zamindari. Dasarathi was residing at Dargha Bazar (where Fakirmohan had built his own bungalow) with his wife Menaka, two sons, Banabara and Natabar and an intelligent, affectionate chaperon, Saraswati Dei. The eldest son, after his marriage, lived in his Rukunadeipur village. Dasarathi who was working as a *Mohurir* in the Cuttack Collectorate was promoted to the post of Nazir, the day his daughter was born (on the fullmoon day of *Magha*.) His second son Natabar passed Entrance Examination, and started working in the Collectorate as a petition writer.

Chandamani got married to Pratapa Udita Malla Uttararaya, a classmate of Natabar. He was religious and kindhearted. He became popular as a benevolent zamindar. Natabar also got married to Visakha, the daughter of Chhakadi Patnaik of Asuragadia village under Harishapur *killa* near Jagatsinghpur. After the marriage of his two sons and only daughter, Dasarathi showed reluctance to serve any more. On his appeal, he was given voluntary retirement, and his son Natabara became Nazir. Dasarathi went back to his village, where later he died of blood vomiting. Natabara and his wife chose to stay at Cuttack soon after the obsequies of Dasarathi. Visakha's youth and her husband's earnings would have made her happier had not a beautiful maid like Chitrakala been there who made her lack-lustre. Nakaphodia Maa, the woman-hairdresser, living in close quarters took advantage of the situation and pampered Nazir's wife.

One day the two women, eg Chitrakala and Nakaphodia Maa were found at daggers drawn. Nakaphodia Maa commented on Chitrakala's character and raved how she was a parasite on the Nazir. Chitrakala became furious when she heard it. In the meanwhile, Visakha ran to their midst in the dark only to be beaten by them in a mad frenzy. The matter was reported to the Nazir when he returned late. Chitrakala managed to coax Visakha and put all blame on Nakaphodia Maa who was denied entry to the house hereafter.

In the meanwhile, Udita Pratapa Uttararaya fell ill. After a prolonged high fever he died near the family's presiding deity Jugalkishore in the evening. Chandamani, mother of two sons Narahari and Srihari became a widow. On the fourth day of Uditpratapa's death, Chandamani's brother Nazir Natabara arrived with a band of sepoys, accompanied by Chitrakala. He introduced Chitrakala as Lalita and justified his late arrival. He would now stand a support at the plight of his sister, would look after her estate and shape the future of the two children who were, as he repeatedly said, 'dearer than life to me.' Cuttack was nearly thirty miles away. He would not be able to frequent his sister's place. For immediate domestic management, he deployed Chitrakala alias Lalita. He publicly announced that he was deputed by the government to settle the affairs of the estate on the eve of its coming under the Court of Wards. He acted in a pretentious manner. The obsequies were over at the major expense of Uditpratapa's cousin. The writer devotes his 25th chapter of the novel to a stately "Pandit Sabha" or a conference of learned men. It was attended by erudite scholars from Nabadwip, Kasi, Puri, Balasore, Dhenkanal, Balia and Baragarh under the chairmanship of venerable Vidyasagara. The scholars discoursed on the six schools of Indian philosophy besides Buddhism. Even philosophies of western scholars like Mill and Spenser were referred to. The meeting was a sequel to the obsequies.

During his brief stay at Naripur, Nazir Natabara held out threats to the villagers, branded all official clerks of Uttararay's cutchery as crooks and swindlers and replaced them by a new team from Cuttack, much to the shock and surprise of Saraswati Dei, the motherly chaperon.

He connived with Chitrakala and stealthily removed the cash and valuables. On the day of his departure, Natabara cooked up another plan. He appraised everybody of a government order that all costly ornaments, gemstones and jewellery of Chandamani be kept in an iron chest under lock and key, a duplicate of which would be kept in the Nizarat office at Cuttack which would be guarded by the sentry. With these parting words, he was about to leave for Cuttack. Chitrakala was prying into the place where the matron had kept the key of the chest. While Saraswati was bidding farewell to Natabara, she managed to obtain the key, open the chest, and secretly handed over the jewellery bag to Natabara. Natabara left the place in secret without even torchlights. He did not have time to talk to his widowed sister.

The next morning, Nazir Natabara met the Collector Mr. Dawson at his residence. He was looking haggard. He sobbed out the news of the sad demise of his sister's husband which the Collector already knew. The Collector said that he would keep the estate under the Court of Wards as per rule. It further saddened Natabara. He made a plea that his educated sister would efficiently manage the administration of the estate. When her husband took to gambling and was idling away his time, Chandamani was looking after the estate affairs. He further said that his sister had already established a school in her *killa*. Her plan was to set up two more schools and a hospital. The death of her husband unfortunately delayed its execution. He immediately brought out a petition supposed to have been written and signed by Chandamani. Natabara did his best to impress on the Collector about his sister's efficiency, and volunteered to assist his sister at off hours honorarily. Mrs Dawson who was relaxing in a rocking chair close by and

embroidering on a piece of cloth listened to Natabara's plea and made a sudden outburst - "*You see Dawson, I know the Hindus are very cruel to women; they confine them in dark rooms like beasts, you better give some power to Chandamani in order that she may be enlightened.*" Mr Dawson, the Collector said agreeably - '*Better submit this report in the office.*"

The petition of Chandamani was approved and Natabara Das was appointed by the government to manage the affairs of the estate without any additional remuneration. The *Peskar* expressed his unhappiness over the hasty decision of the Collector as he knew about Natabara's ill intent.

The oppressive administration of Nazir Natabara in Naripur cutchery was evident from the petition of a *killa* official Gokul Patnaik. The letter showed how the Nazir issued illegal warrants against one Hari Sahu and fined him. Gokul sought in his petition to punish Chatura Barik alias Haribola Barik for defying the Nazir's orders. The domestic establishment of the Nazir's widow sister was in jeopardy. Saraswati Dei had to borrow money and paddy from Sadhu Sahu, the native moneylender. Her repeated letters to Natabara for re-payment of her money which Natabara had taken during the obsequies of Chandamani's husband were never replied to.

Tikkayat Narahari Malla Uttararaya, son of late Uditapratapa passed Minor Examination from the village school in first division. It was decided that he would reside in Natabara's Cuttack residence to pursue his higher studiy. There was actually no study atmosphere in his uncle's house. Natabara's mother-in-law Mangala Dei and Raghaba, his brother-in-law were now staying there. Raghaba's rustic behaviour deterred Narahari's study. Raghaba picked up intimacy with a wreck and a drunken debauch, named Prabhudayal and maligned Narahari. His mother Mangala Dei and Visakha also ill-treated him. Narahari was upset. While sitting under a banyan tree close to the bank of the Kathajori river, he was found by his uncle, the *Peskar*. His uncle took him to his house, collected all his belongings from Natabara's house, and gave special attention to

Narahari's studies. Narahari passed his Entrance Examination in the first division. He was awarded scholarship of Rs.15/- per month. He sent his three months' scholarship money to his mother alongwith a letter dated 21st April 1879. His letter carrying the news of his success in the examination was received by his mother who instantly arranged a celebration in the precincts of the family's presiding deity. She strangely died the same night of severe heart attack.

A villager named Haribola Barik, a defiant youth registered his sharp reactions against the maladministration of Nazir Natabara. He heard a similar protest at Nuapur Hat (a weekly rural market place) against the Nazir where thousands of people had congregated. He was even prepared to meet the Commissioner at Cuttack and appraise him of Nazir's exploitation.

Natabara was aware of the ryots' resentment. He went to Chhotaray Narahari to placate him as his well-wisher and regent, and even offered him a hundred rupees which Narahari reluctantly accepted. His proposal to his nephew Narahari to move to a well-furnished three-storeyed building was not acceptable. The Nazir then made his second visit to his sister after a lapse of seven years. He held his office there. No officials and villagers came to meet him as Haribola Barik had brain-washed all of them. Saraswati Dei also behaved indifferently.

The novel is partly episodic. The annihilation of Raghaba's rural simplicity and stupidity has been deliberately intensified by entangling him in pretentious friendship with a shrewd domiciled Bihari debauch, Prabhudayal. Prabhudayal had a satanic propensity for getting into fraud and earning easy money. Raghaba fell a prey to him. Chitrakala allied herself with Prabhudayal and made him her god-brother. The two evil-mongers connived to ruin the Nazir.

Prabhudayal lent heinous intelligence to Raghaba to obtain an wax-impression of the key of Nazir Natabara's house-treasury and promised him ownership of a big bungalow at Tulasipur which Sheosharan Bhagat, a merchant was going to sell at rupees five thousand. It was a deserted building. Prabhudayal improvised it to

that of a posh bungalow with posted waiters, arranged two female dancers and served intoxicant drinks to Raghaba in a festive mood in that building. Two persons in guise of the owner of the building and a lawyer appeared there at Prabhudayal's bidding to make final transaction. A fake registered document was handed over to Raghaba when he was tipsy.

The Nazir had kept the road cess amounting Rs.5000/- in his house treasury as he received the amount late hours. Meanwhile, Good Friday intervened and in that very night, the government cash was stolen by Raghaba. The stolen cash was paid by him to Prabhudayal Bhagat, and Raghaba luxuriated in that bungalow, remaining most of the time inebriated.

In the meanwhile, Mr Duglas, the Collector was on one year furlough to England. Mr W. Jones acted as Collector-in-charge. The Nazir was summoned to remit the road cess to the treasury. Already a third reminder was received from the Calcutta office to deposit the cash. Natabara was shocked to find that the iron chest, though locked, contained no cash. He was arrested and remanded to the police custody and then sent to prison. The investigation showed that the government cash was stolen with the connivance of the unholy trio, Prabhudayal, Chitrakala and Raghaba. Chitrakala had also tactfully purloined Visakha's cash and jewellery.

The trial took place. Nazir Natabara confessed how he had exploited his innocent sister, her son, the benevolent chaperon, the people of Naripur, his own mother and elder brother and his innocent wife. In the height of his repentance, he complimented Prabhudayal and Chitrakala who were his co-partners in the hell, and commended them for their assistance so that he would no more be led to the gates of hell. He also confided how he made a secret plan to purchase her sister's *taluk* by not depositing the *peshkush* in time. His last wish, he proclaimed, was that all his ill-got money and his sister's jewellery which he had kept in his house separately with an intention to become a king, should be paid to the two innocent sons of his sister Chandamani. He became mad and started dancing with glee, and even commanded the Sessions Judge to salute him.

Narahari and Saraswati Dei sent two women from Naripur to look after Visakha and her mother in their Cuttack residence while Natabara was in prison. Natabara was let off as he had not directly misappropriated government cash, but he was to replenish the government cash. Since Prabhudayal had absconded, he could not be tried. Raghaba Mohanty was awarded one year rigorous imprisonment. Chitrakala was to serve a term of five-year rigorous imprisonment and pay a fine of rupees two hundred.

Banabara, the eldest brother of the Nazir came to Cuttack and escorted Visakha, his brother's wife to his village. Mangala Dei, however, stayed back at Natabara's residence.

Critical Opinion

The novel *Mamu* or Maternal Uncle comprising 67 chapters was printed in the Utkala Sahitya Press in 1913. Its second edition was also released in 1916. The theme, as briefly outlined above was greed for acquiring more land by illegal means as that of *Chha Mana Atha Guntha*. But here, the victim is not utterly ruined. Chandamani, the victim regains her status after the dark cloud is dislodged. The social canvass in this novel is wider than in his first novel. The protagonist in this novel is educated and enjoys the grace of the Collector. His knowledge of English helps him rise in life. The novel is spread over a period from 1841 to 1880 in Orissa's history and the social life of this period is more aptly portrayed here compared to his first novel. *Mamu* seems to be more matured with lesser authorial intrusion and literary intertextuality. The novel has another vantage ground when the writer zooms up philosophical discourses by inviting erudite scholars of India to Naripur on the aftermath of Uditapratapa's death, gives his own comment towards the close of the novel which is a poetic appraisal of the villainous Nazir Natabar -

"A sown seed was pressed beneath a piece of stone, sans light, water and wind which prevented its germination. Yet the seed was not stale, it remained as it was. After a long lapse of time when that blocking stone was dislodged, it could receive

light whereupon it sprouted and crept over." (trans. by the author). Nazir Natabara Dasa's parentage was to some extent aristocratic unlike that of Ramachandra Mangaraja's. His weird youth, wealth, property, position and lack of conscience only acted as a blocking stone which stunted his growth to a reckonable personality. When the seed of conscience, hid in his heart, got the light of repentance, it instantly crept out and he made public a series of confessions. He did not die like the protagonist in *Chha Mana Atha Guntha*, but came out of iron bars to face life and to apologize to the people whom he had wronged.

4. PRAYASCHITTA
[*Expiation*]

The Characters

Baishnaba Charana Patnaik Vidyadhara Mahapatra - Son of Bishalaksha of Chandanapur under Asureshwara *pargana*. A reputed zamindar. Belongs to the superior *karana* caste (*ShriKarana*). His family consists of his wife, Haripriya and son Gobinda Chandra. He is devoted to his presiding deity, Govinda Jew. There is an age-old rivalry between his family and that of another lower *Karana*-caste zamindar, Sankarshana Mohanty of Samasarapur. Baishnaba Charana becomes a Vaishnav and stays in Brundavana after the death of his wife and daughter-in-law.

Haripriya - Wife of Baishnaba Charana and mother of Gobinda. She belongs to Gopalapur village.

Sankarshana Mohanty - Head-*Karana* and zamindar of Samasarapur. He is devoid of family heritage. For sometime, he operated in Calcutta as a petty contractor and worked for foreign ships in loading and unloading. He purchased an estate and became zamindar. His family consists of his wife Lalita and daughter Indumati/ Induprabha. He strives hard to magnify his image as a more honourable zamindar than Baishnaba Charana, and finally expiates for his folly by becoming a Vaishnav.

Kuanra Gobinda Chandra - Aged 22, the only son of Baishnaba Charana of Chandanapur. Passed Matriculation from the Mission School. He continues his study in Cuttack College.

He marries Indumati who ends her life by drowning prematurely. He goes to Brundavan in cognito as a Vaishnav. At his father's behest, he returns to Chandanapur and manages the two zamindaries, those of his father and father-in-law.

Rajivalochana - A nephew of Sankarshana Mohanty and son of widow Tara Dei. A poetaster and classmate of Gobinda Chandra. He is an intelligent guy.

Kamalalochana - An intelligent young man, a speaker of repute, a singer and a composer of poems. He symbolises the apparent failure of the 20th century civilization. He has a great influence on collegiate youths. He prepares his speeches on a small consideration.

Sadananda - Son of late Dushasana, who happens to be Haripriya's cousin. He is three years senior to Gobinda. After his father's death, he was adopted by Sankarshana. He is very intelligent and responsible for the debacle of two families. He is also a fraud. He becomes a Vaishnav at the end to expiate his immoral actions.

Saita - A faithful servant of Baishnaba Charana and is attached to Gobinda. He is verily a body-guard of Govinda. He visits all holy places in search of Gobinda who absconds from the hospital, and finally reaches Brundavan where he finds Baishnaba, Sankarshana and Kuanra Gobinda. He is one of the excellent and soft-hearted characters in the novel.

Marua - Daughter of rich Bhimasena Malla. She lost her mother during her infancy and her father when she was four. She works as a maid-servant in Sankarshana's family and acts as a chaperon to Indumati.

W. Jones - Principal of Cuttack College.

The Story

The story of *Prayaschitta* is set in four places - Chandanapur, Samasarapur, Cuttack and Brundavan. Baishnaba Charana Patnaik

Vidyadhara Mahapatra, a zamindar of *ShriKarana.*caste had long-standing disputes with Sankarshana Mohanty who belonged to a lower *Karana*-caste. The latter raised himself to the status of a zamindar by dint of sincere effort. Baishnaba looked down upon him as inferior, as he had been a petty contractor in Calcutta, working in the shipyard. Baishnaba's derogatory comments had irked Sankarshana.

Sankarshana wanted to avenge this insult. His nephew Rajibalochana and Baishnaba Charana's adopted son Sadananda were studying at Cuttack. They contrived a plan to put an end to the persisting rivalry between the two zamindar families. Rajiba took the lead. He found young Gobinda Chandra, the son of Baishnaba Charan quite suave and reserved, who loved composing poems. Could he patch up the differences by making Gobinda a prospective groom for his cousin Indumati ? He spoke about various endowments of Indumati / Induprabha (the daughter of Sankharshana) to Gobinda that Indumati was a poet and a paragon of beauty. He could study that Gobinda was showing some interest in the girl whom he had never seen. Gobinda was studying in F.A. class. He did not relish the idea of marriage as it would certainly impede his studies. Sadananda, his step-brother who was staying with Gobinda at Gobinda's Sheik Bazar residence also tried to coax him to entertain the proposal of marriage.

College students were often meeting at common places on Saturdays where they used to indulge in debating many current issues, social prejudices, and traditional Hindu practices. In one such session, Rajibalochana, the nephew of Saknkarshana praised Gobinda's poetic talent, and tactfully referred to Indumati's art of versification.

The college was closed for summer vacation. Gobinda and Sadananda went back to Chandanapur. Gobinda was found cheerless and maudlin. Sadananda managed craftily to send a registered letter, supposed to have been signed by W.Jones, Principal of Cuttack College, at the address of Gobinda. The Principal had directed Gobinda and Sadananda, students of second year F.A. class to present themselves in the college on June, 2, Monday to

receive their examination results. The manipulation worked. Both of them were back to Cuttack. In the meanwhile, Rajibalochana arranged a dinner party at his Buxibazar mess where Kamalalochana, a vibrant youth, presented his scholarly discourse on 'selection of life-partner' or *Jauna nirvachana* wherein he referred to Darwin's theory. He also emphasized the right of a prospective groom to independently select his partner, overriding the traditional Hindu custom of selection of bride by parents, which was considered to be a legacy of social prejudice. The discourse had a palpable impact on Gobinda.

Gobinda's marriage with Indumati was celebrated in a hushed manner without the knowledge of his parents. Sankarshana deliberately sent the message to Baishnaba Charana after the marriage ceremony was over, with an intention to vindicate his legal claim over his son-in-law Gobinda. The news of his son's marriage reached Baishnaba Patnaik on the aftermath of an earthquake of minor intensity. The news upset Gobinda's parents. Haripriya, Govinda's mother suddenly became an emotional wreck and remained confined to bed. Sankarshana was cautiously monitoring the impact of marriage on Gobinda. His apprehension was that Gobinda might be disenchanted while pursuing his studies at Cuttack.

A poem expressing Indumati's longing for Gobinda was composed by Rajibalochana to which Indumati put her signature under duress. This poem was sent to Gobinda which contained a message of invitation to come to Samasarapur post-haste. Govinda felt restless. The news of his mother's serious illness which reached him, was reasoned out to be fake by Sadananda. He prevailed upon Gobinda not to heed it but better to pay a visit to Samasarapur, in lieu of Chandanapur.

The author feels uncomfortable at the licentious advice of Sadananda. He intrudes into the text and comments -

'The mistress of the house (the wife of Baishnaba Patnaik) *was kind enough to pick up this destitute beggar. How can a cut-throat be an honest man ? I wish Govinda Jew* (the house deity) *would shield her under His divine disc. Any way, the matter will be thrashed out later'* (trans. by the author)

Rajibalochana fabricated another poem beseeching Gobinda to hasten to Samasarapur, and got it endorsed by Indumati. Gobinda rushed to his father-in-law's house by palanquin. Saita, his house-page followed him. They reached the Surusuria ferry. The river was in spate. The palanquin could not be ferried as no big boat was readily available. It was fifteen past ten at night. The sky was about to burst open. Gobinda somehow managed to cross the river by boat alone, and told his servant Saita to reach Samasarapur later. Gobinda's nocturnal adventure ended in grave physical assault on him by the *paiks*, guarding his father-in-law's bungalow at night. He was caught as an intruding thief at the odd hour of the night, and was confined in the *cutchery* without the knowledge of Indumati and her maid Marua. Saita reached there at dawn. He, by mistake, also kicked Gobinda. In the morning every thing was known. Gobinda who had been severely mauled in the previous night, was brought to the Cuttack General Hospital. This tragic turn of events deeply dismayed Indumati. Sankarshana was out of wits with worry. Marua remained senseless. Indumati told her last prayer to the house-deity Vinodavihari, and then tip-toed to the bank of the flooded river, close to her house and jumped into it when the moon was just setting down in the west.

Gobinda heard the death tidings of his mother and wife in the hospital. He felt that he was responsible for these two deaths. He was slowly recovering. He opened his tin box and iron brief-case. He then brought out some ornaments and wore on his finger a gold ring on which Indumati's name was engraved. He wrote a letter to the moneylender, Lachhaman Bhagat for a loan of rupees five thousand on mortgage of his jewellery. He got the amount, gave rupees one thousand and five hundred and a diamond ring to faithful Saita, bade him go home and visit his old mother. Then he wrote another letter to his attending doctor wherein he enclosed a cash of rupees two thousand and gold *mohurs* worth one thousand and five hundred rupees as a token of gratitude for attending on him for the last five years. He also requested in his letter that the hospital authorities should not make any search to locate him.

After these tragedies that rocked the two families the setting of the novel is shifted abruptly to Brundavan. Baishnaba Charan Patnaik had already left his zamindari, authorising the deity Vinodavihari as the owner of his estate, and had gone away to Brundavana to expiate for his sin. There he became a Vaishnav and stayed at Kunja Kutira. Sankarshana, too, soon after his daughter's suicidal death, went on a pilgrimage, and finally landed at Brundaban. He also stayed at the same Kunja Kutira as a junior to Baishnaba. Gobinda who had secretly fled the hospital also reached there by making a circuitous pilgrimage. He met his father and father-in-law on the day of Lord Srikrushna's birthday. Saita was already at Brundavan since one year in that *math* as a sweeper without disclosing his identity. He informed Gobinda about Sadananda's misappropriation of cash while he was serving a young zamindar at Ratanapur as Naib and consequently two years imprisonment. Saita found Sadananda who was moving like a vagrant monk at Brundavan. All those who had left their native places were reunited at Brundavan.

Baishnaba, urged his son Gobinda to return to Chandanapur and manage the estate on behalf of Govinda Jew as a trustee. Sankarshana also endorsed it, and gave Gobinda an additional responsibility to look after his zamindari which by all legal means, now fell into Gobinda's hands. Gobinda returned to his estate, built two tombs for his mother and wife and lived a righteous life. Marua had already become a female monk. She was found atoning for the crime of her negligence with regard to Indumati's nocturnal escape and suicide.

Critical Opinion

The novel *Prayaschitta* or Expiation refers to Orissa's socio-economic history for the period from 1881 to 1915. During this period, changes took place on account of the spread of western education and disintegration of landed aristocracy. Fakirmohan was keeping himself abreast of changes in his times. He was well aware of the brain-storming book *Origin of the Species* by Charles Darwin which we find discussed through Kamalalochana in the *alochana sabha* (seminar), presided over by Gobinda Chandra. Of course, Kamalalochana was paid for such discourse. The need for expiation

which Fakirmohan poetically emphasized may appear melodramatic, but it was indeed, a cruel necessity for those older generations that blindly adhered to dogmatic orthodox and also for those fanciful, half-educated westernised youths of the time who were prone to imbibe the subversive culture of the West. Such conflict and clash between the traditional value-frames and the new social orientation provide a new impetus to the thematic development of the novel. The traditional agriculture-based rural society was controlled by the landed aristocracy with embedded hierarchical caste system. Fakirmohan consciously used it as a backdrop against the forthcoming social change in order to assess how much shock it could absorb. It may not be out of place to mention here that Fakirmohan was disturbed when his son Mohinimohan published an article in defence of atheism and got married to Hiranprabha, a Bengali lady in 1904 against Fakirmohan's wish. This novel probably makes a veiled reference to the author's family conflict.

Prayaschitta was first published in 1915 comprising 55 chapters. When Mohinimohan brought out its second edition in 1925, it was unfortunately an edited version and the name of Induprabha was changed to Induamati. He also clipped out the tail-end of the novel as he might have found reflections on him and his wife interspersed in the novel.

Fakirmohan has never evaded his strategy of introducing serious thought, both spiritual and metaphysical, in his novels. He incorporates a learned conference each in *Mamu* and in *Prayaschitta* and makes Gobinda in *Prayaschitta* reflect on life, soul and death. The element of humour is comparatively less in *Prayaschitta* as against its abundance in *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* and *Mamu*. In his earlier two novels, punishment is meted out to wrongdoers both by the social instrument and by Providence as well. But in *Prayaschitta* the punishment is self-imposed. In *Chha Mana Atha Guntha*, the protagonist's change of heart is not pronounced, whereas in *Mamu*, the same is more explicit. In *Prayaschitta*, it has become a self-realised refrain which emerged from the author's conscientious auto-mechanism and personal disquiet.

3.8 Essays / Periodical Writings / Expository Prose-Pieces of Fakirmohan

Fakirmohan's short pieces of expository prose are diversified in subject matter. Some are articles and dissertations, but quite a lot of them, are familiar, informal and personal essays which can be grouped according to the author's content and mood. Most of these prose pieces play up the personality of the author and measure the depth of his scholarship and perception. In descriptive and narrative pieces, the author develops his ideas in loose structure.

Some of his formal essays are objective, compact and aphoristic. But gentle irony and humour run all through his prose writings. Even his sundry writings are not free from these elements. His style is sprightly, conversational and invested with a special charm and at times poignancy.

Fakirmohan's first essay on 'Narijatira Parivarttana' (The change of dress code for women) published in the *Sambadavahika* (1868-69) is indeed the first modern Oriya Essay, written prior to Radhanath Ray's essay, "Viveki" (January 1873) and Madhusudan Rao's *Prabandhamala* (1880). His humorous write-up, 'Nananka Panji' (The Miscellaneous writings of *Nana,* popularly known as Bai Mahanti) is a rare document of the then Orissa's socio-cultural and literary profile written in prose and interspersed with limericks and intraliterariness. Nearly twenty-five such belles-lettres of Fakirmohan have been recently anthologised alongwith important speeches and addresses wherein he spoke about the revival of cottage industries, right to manufacture salt and regeneration of Oriya language. When he speaks about religion, philosophy, yoga and ethics, his own rational interpretations and logical deductions lend to it a global and cosmopolitan orientation.

The forthcoming 3rd volume of *Fakirmohan Granthavali*, edited by Prof Debendra Kumar Dash enlists the following forty-two essays of Fakirmohan which await a deeper analysis. Some of the periodical essays of Fakirmohan were pseudonymous writings. The pseudonyms used as - 'Shri-Baleswar', 'Jane Bruddha' (By One old man), 'Jane Bhuktabhogi' (By An Experienced One), 'Jane Nida Odiya' (By A Genuine Oriya) etc.

Essays appeared in Periodicals

1.	Mandiramanankare Kutsita Murtti (Obscene figurines in the temples)	Oct. 16, 1872, *Sambadavahika*
2.	Gadajatara Rajamane (Rajas of Feudatory States)	Aug.1, 1874 -ibid-
3.	Udishyara Adhunika Avastha (The modern Scenario of Orissa)	Aug. 16, 1874 -ibid-
4.	Aaya dekhi kara vaye, Pachhaku Kaale Taana tuna Hue (Spend as per your income to avoid hardship in future)	Feb.1, 1875 -ibid-
5.	Surjya (The Sun)	Feb. 16, 1875 -ibid-
6.	Brahmanda (The Universe)	March 16, 1875 -ibid-
7.	Vaahaa Vibaada (The Marriage-dispute)	1875-76 -ibid-
8.	Ambhamanankara Kaviraja (Our traditional doctors)	Feb. 16, 1876 -ibid-
9.	Pruthaka Na Hua (Do not be separated)	Sept. 1, 1877 -ibid-
10.	Nukhila Munda Kamhu Telia Heba (How can one's dry hair be oily ?)	Nov. 1, 1877 -ibid-
11.	Krushi-Vanijya Dwaraa Deshara Unnati Hue (The country prospers by agricultural commerce)	1980-81 -ibid-
12.	Dhumaketu (The Comet)	1981 -ibid-
13.	Nimna Shiksha Sambandhiya Gotie Paramarsha (An advice pertaining to Lower Primary Education)	Feb., 1883 -ibid-
14.	Prakruta Ekata Kahaku Kahanti (What do we mean by Real Unity)	May, 1883 -ibid-
15.	Odishara Varttamana Avastha (The Present Situation in Orissa)	1884 -ibid-

16. Dhenkanalara Ki Durdasha 1885
(What a plight of Dhenkanal !) -ibid-

17. Odishyara Dahi Chudakhia Brahmane 1889
(The Curd-and-flattened rice-eater Brahmins of Orissa) -ibid-

18. Shakyasimhanka Stree Gopa April, 1889
(Gopa, the wife of Shakyasimha) -ibid-

19. Jati-Samskara Andolana
(Movement for caste-reformation) July, 1989 -ibid-

20. Swabhava O Danda Dec., 1989
(Propensity and Punishment) -ibid-

21. Milana (A festive congregation of gods for Divine Service) 1890 -ibid-

22. About English Education April, 1890 -ibid-

23. Ascharya Upachikirsha April, 1890
(Strange desire to do good or altruism) -ibid-

24. Hindumanankar Upanivesha 1891
(Colonisation by the Hindus) -ibid-

25. Jahara Vala Tahara Phala 1891
(Might is Right) -ibid-

26. Pralobhana ti Kaushala 1891
(Seductive means is the only expediency) -ibid-

27. Vidwesha O Bhakti Nov., 1891
(Enmity and Devotion) -ibid-

28. Kabuli Hindu Sept., 1892 -ibid-

29. Deshiya Sahityonnati June, 1897
(Development of Native Literature) *Indradhanu*

30. Yoga Shastra July 97 - March 98
Utkala Sahitya

31. Utkala Bhashara Bhuta Bhavishyata Dec. 1899
(The Past and Future of Oriya Language) -ibid-

32. Jamayet Babajinka Utpatti August, 1901
(The Origin of Jamayet Babajis) *Utkala Dipika*

33. Aalimaalika (A niche for miscellaneous articles)	1902-05	*Utkala Sahitya*
34. Shrikshetrare Chaitanya Mahaprabhu	July, 1904	-ibid-
35. Kabi Gopalakrushna Pattanaik	Sept., 1904	-ibid-
36. Kabi Michael Madhusudan Dutta	March, 1905	-ibid-
37. Tri-dharma Samanwaya (Integration of three *dharma-s*)	Feb., 1907	*Mukura*
38. Tukaram	1907-08,	-ibid-
39. Gotra (The Hindu Lineage)	Feb.-March, 1908	-ibid-
40. Arata (The Spinning Wheel)	March 1908	*Sambadavahika*
41. Shudra O Vedadhikara (The *Shudras* and their right to the Veda-s	June 1916	*Utkala Sahitya*
42. Ghodara Kurukuri Roga (A disease affecting horses)	May, 1916	*Utkala Madhupa*

Besides the above list, a few more prose writings as shown below deserve a special mention.

1. A literary criticism on 'Rebati' in the form of a brief dialogue was published in Fakirmohan's pen-name (Shri) in *Utkala Sahitya* in 1898 (two months after the publication of 'Rebati'). It ends with a comical remark that Rebati's granny Duguri first cremated Rebati's deadbody and then cremated herself.

2. His literary evaluation of Sachhidananda Tribhuvana Dev's poem 'Prakruti' in 1911 speaks of his profound perception and originality.

3. His comic write-up' Siraj Uddaullanka Chatashali ebam Guru dakshina' shows the mischievous intent of the Nawab who killed his teacher.

4. In the long historical eassy 'Baleswara Bandarare Olandaja Jati' Fakirmohan identifies Olanda Nala, Olanda Sahi, Dinamar Dinga etc. in Balasore which were once associated with the Dutch settlement. His expalnation of the word 'Phiringi'as the hybrid progeny of Portugeese male and Malayasian wives is quite interesting.

A Sample Short Story in English Translation

REBATI

B. K. Satpathy

Patapur is a tiny village in the Haripur *Pargana* of the Cuttack District. At one end of the village was situated a house which had a row of four rooms, a shed for the *dhenki* [eg a wooden contrivance for separating husks from grains] and a well in the court-yard. The front room was used as guest room as well as rest room for tenants who came to pay rent or other dues.

Shyamabandhu Mohanty was an agent of the Zamindar. He received rupees two as his commission and earned another couple of rupees by other means. With four rupees he managed his household smoothly. The family had no wants. Vegetables were raised in the garden. There were two cows which gave birth to calves year after year and so there was no dearth of milk and curd. Cow dung mixed with husks was made into cakes and baked in the sun for fuel. The Zamindar had allowed him three *manas* of his land to cultivate. There was therefore neither deficit nor surplus of paddy and rice.

Shyamabandhu was a very simple and honest man, greatly loved and regarded by the tenants. He himself moved from door to door collecting the Zamindar's dues. Never did he use a harsh word nor did he ever realise a fine illegally. He was trusted so much that no tenant ever asked for receipts for payment. The peon of the Zamindar was, however, very hard-hearted and exacting. So, Shyambandhu himself bribed him off when he came to fleece them.

There were only four members in the family; Shyamabandhu and his wife, the old mother and their only daughter aged ten. Her name was Rebati. In the evening, Shyamabandhu used to sit in the *verandah* and some times sung *Chhandas* and *Bhajans*. Some

times he used to read the *Bhagabat* placing the oil lamp on the wooden stand. Rebati sat by his side and listened to these recitals attentively. Very soon she learnt a few of them and began reciting herself. These were heard very well in the lips of a small girl and village folk were often attracted by her sweet voice. Shyamabandhu was fond of a particular *bhajan* which he would often like his daughter to sing.

Some two years before. the Deputy Inspector of Schools in course of tour chanced to halt at Patapur at night. At the request of the public he recommended to the Inspector the establishment of a U. P. School in the village. The teacher's pay of Rs.4/- was to be paid by the Government. Every student had, however, to contribute an *anna* each to the teacher.

The new teacher was Vasudeb, who was trained at Cuttack. He was truly worthy of his name. Aged about twenty, he was very handsome and accomplished. Yet he was unassuming in his walk as well as manners. In his childhood he suffered from epileptic fits and as a remedy the mother applied a hot bottle to his forehead. The burnt mark was still there but far from being a stain it was a decoration to his face.

Orphaned in childhood, Vasudeb was reared up in his maternal uncle's family. As Shyamabandhu and Vasudeb belonged to the same caste some sort of attachment began to grow between them. So on festive and ceremonial occasions, Shyamabandhu used to go to school to invite Vasudeb saying, "Your aunt wants you in the evening; please come to our house." Such frequent invitations and visits led to some sort of intimacy between the two.

At the sight of Vasudeb, Rebati, out of sympathy, would say "Poor orphan ! who would look after his comforts ?" Whenever she saw Vasudeb, she would jump out of joy and announce his arrival to the house. Vasu would come in the evening and hear the *bhajans* sung by Rebati. The old songs were for ever new to him.

One day Shyamabandhu came to know that there was a Girls High School at Cuttack, where girls were taught stitching, sewing

and other crafts besides regular studies. He was determined from that day to send Rebati there and sought Vasu's advice. Vasu who regarded Shyamabandhu as his father said, "I was just going to suggest the same thing to you, father." So both agreed in the matter of sending Rebati to Cuttack for higher studies when time would come. Rebati who was listening to these talks jumped with delight and rushed to inform the mother and grandma of that piece of good news. The mother was very happy at this but grandma said, "What has a girl to do with books and studies ? Let her learn cooking rice, churning milk, and decorating walls."

At night Shyamabandhu was sitting on a piece of mango plank waiting for his meals. Rebati too joined him in eating. The grandma sat in front of them and asked her daughter-in-law to serve rice, dal, salt and the like to them. Casually she asked, "Shyam ! I hear that Rebi would go to Cuttack to study. What will a girl do with her education ?" Shyamabandhu said by way of reply, "Let her read. The daughters of Jhankad Patnaik are now able to read the *Bhagavat* and the *Vaidehishavilas*." Greatly annoyed Rebati abused her grandma saying, " Thou old ignorant fool ! She entreated her father to send her up for studies. Shyamabandhu assured her daughter that, he would. The matter ended then and three.

Next day when a copy of Sitanath Babu's *Primer* was handed over to Rebati, she eagerly turned leaf after leaf, from the first page till the last. Her joy knew no bounds when she found pictures of elephants, horses and cows in the pages of the book. Kings and Princes are proud of possessing them, others enjoy riding on them but Rebati was delighted to see them in pictures. She ran to her mother and showed her the book. She expressed her joy. But when the book was shown to grandma she was irritated and dismissed her forthwith. Rebati too in her turn, scolded her roundly and came away.

Next day was *Sripanchami*, an auspicious day for commencing lessons. Rebati got up in the morning, finished her bath, put on a new piece of cloth and waited breathlessly for Vasudeb who would impart her the first lessons. Unfortunately, no elaborate preparations

could be made for the ceremony for fear of grandma who was up against girls' education. At about ten in the morning Vasudeb arrived and wrote down for her the first two alphabets of the language. Since that day regular studies of Rebati began. Vasu came every evening to coach her. In two years time, Rebati made rapid and good progress and could read and write fluently the poem from Madhu Babu's *Chhandamala*.

One night at meal time Shyamabandhu and his mother started a conversation on a subject over which they had some discussion before.

"What do you think of the match, Mother ?" "Suitable, but what about caste ?" "Do you think I never enquired about it. Though poor, he belongs to a good *Karana* family."

"Who cares for wealth son ? Caste is all important in such matters. But do you think he will stay with us here ?"

"Where else will he go ? However good they might be, they are after all his maternal uncle and aunts."

Rebati, Who happened to be present, heard it all. What she understood from the talks we cannot say, but this we knew that since that day a change came over her manners and attitudes. She blushed when Vasu taught her in the presence of her father. For no reason, she began to smile and when she became conscious of it, she cast her head down and suppressed the smile by pressing her lips hard. She, thereafter, said just 'yes' or 'no' to all questions put to her by Vasu at the lessons. Some times she read without opening her lips and after studies ran into the house, her face ripping with chubby smiles. Every day in the evening she would stand at the threshold leaning against the door as if waiting for somebody, and when Vasu came, she ran indoors and declined to come to him even after repeated calls. The grandma, on her part, began to abuse her whenever she came out to the *verandah*.

Thus passed two years since that *Sripanchami*. It is not always fair weather with anybody in God's creation. The month of *Phalguna*

(February-March) set in. One morning rumour spread that Shyamabandhu had been attacked with cholera. In rural areas, people become panicky in such occasions and never stir out of their houses. They have a firm belief that old witch is afoot with her basket and going round the village to pick up lives here and there.

So none came to Shyamabandhu's house. What would the two unfortunate women do ? Rebati was constantly weeping and howling about. Vasudeb heard it all and rushed to the house from the school. Unafraid, regardless of consequences, he sat by the side of Shyamabandhu and began nursing him. He rubbed his feet and put drops of water into his parching tongue. But all in vain. At about 3 O'clock, Shyamabandhu turned his face and looking intently at the face of Vasudeb mumbled a few broken words just to say - "Rebati for you". Vasudeb burst out into weeping. The whole house wailed, Rebati rolled on the dust. "All is over" the villagers thought. By night-fall the end came.

What should they do now ? Vasudeb was young and inexperienced in these affairs. The other two were women. Bana Sethi, the washerman of the village had some knowledge in these matters having in his lifetime disposed of fifty to sixty dead bodies. The lure of a few pieces of clothes urged him to help them. With a towel tucked to his waist and an axe on his shoulder, he arrived. As their's was the only *Karana* family in the village, Vasu with the assistance of the two women managed to do the last rites. The morning star was already in the sky when they returned from the cremation ground. Hardly had Rebati's mother entered the threshold when she too was attacked with that fatal disease and by noon that day, she too passed away.

Time and tide wait for none. The rich become richer and the poor poorer. Days come and days go, so passed three months since the death of Shyamabandbu. There were two cows in the house. The Zamindar's men appeared one day and took them away for default in the payment of land rent money. But we know Shyamabandhu regarded the Zamindar's money as forbidden fruit

and had no rest till the last pie was accounted for and deposited. But the Zamindar knew that the cows he had, were of high-yielding variety and it was immaterial if he had paid the money. Next to go, was the three *manas* of land which the Zamindar had given Shyamabandhu to cultivate. What was the need for the ploughmen or the labourer if there were no land ? So the man who was in charge of the lands departed on the fullmoon day. The two bullocks had been sold already for rupees seventeen and a half and that amount was spent after the double funeral. A month passed some how or other. Yet another month passed by selling or mortgaging this pot or that brass utensil.

Vasu came both morning and evening, stayed till night and returned when both the grandma and grand-daughter had gone to bed. When he paid any money neither the old woman nor Rebati would accept it. If he pressed them to accept the money, it lay on the shelf. Vasu came to know this, and desisted from offering any more. All that he did was to take a copper or two from the old woman and purchase for them daily necessaries which lasted them for eight to ten days. Meanwhile, the roof of the house was gone and a new thatch has to be put on it. Vasu purchased two-rupee worth of straw and dumped them on the backyard. Thatching operations were delayed for want of an auspicious day.

With the passage of time the old woman had ceased crying which she did day and night. She wept only in the evening and when she was tired, she fell asleep on the spot and spent the night there. Her vision was gradually impaired and she became almost mad. Though she moaned less, she increased her scolding for Rebati. For, she had concluded that Rebati was at the root of all evils. It was she alone and her studies that her son and daughter-in-law passed away, the bullocks were sold, the ploughmen deserted them, the Zamindar's men took away their cow and to crown all, she lost her vision. She was undoubtedly an ill-starred wench.

Rebati could not stand by her grandma for fear of being scolded. She stood like a log or stone either in the back door or in the door

corners with tears streaming down her eyes. Vasu, too, in the eyes of the old woman, was guilty for it was he who educated her. But she could not say anything to him because in his absence every thing in the house would come to a standstill. Moreover, the Zamindar's accounts had not been finally settled and cleared. His men were coming every now and then and pressing them with this and that. Who would find out and produce books of account before them if Vasu were not there ?

Rebati was no longer that sprightly girl moving about the house like a living doll. None had even heard her voice since the day of her father's death, none had seen her in the verandha. True she did not weep aloud but her eyes were like two blue water lilies tossing in the water. The tiny hopes of her tiny life were dashed for ever. Day and night were the same to her. For her, there was no light in the sun, no darkness in the night. The world was all void and emptiness. Her mind was filled with thoughts of her parents. "Here sat she, there went he and thus they talked" and such thoughts and pictures came crowding to her mind. She could not believe that they were gone for ever. She knew no hunger, she had no sleep in her eyes, so also bed she was in thoughts of her parents. It was only for fear of her Grandma that she sat up to eat; otherwise she rarely got up. She was reduced to a skeleton. She voluntarily stood up only when Vasu arrived and stared at him with wide eyes. When Vasu looked at her, she cast her head down with a sigh. So long as Vasu was there she continued to gaze at him, her eyes and all her senses were at that time full of Vasudeb, nay, her entire being was saturated with the thought of Vasudeb.

It was now about five months since the death of Shyamabandhu. One hot noon of *Jyestha* (May-June) Vasudeb came and knocked at the door. This was rather unusual hour for him to call. When the old woman crawled to the door and opened it, Vasudeb said 'Grandma (he always addressed her so) the Deputy Inspector will examine my boys in his camp at Hariharpur Police station. I am to take all my students there tomorrow morning. It will be five days before I return."

Rebati, who was listening to him in a door corner, sat down with a plop. She would have fallen flat had not she caught hold of the door. Vasu purchased their ration for five days, placed these in the courtyard, bowed down to the Grandma and bade goodbye to her on Saturday evening. The old woman said, "my son ! do not walk in the sun, look to your health and take care to eat in time." And she heaved a long deep sigh.

Rebati continued to gaze at Vasu's face intently. This look was different from the previous one. Vasu too looked at her straight in a manner never before seen on former occasions. Vasu desired to see Rebati closely but her eyelids drooped. At this moment, their looks were transfixed to each others and neither was able to withdraw them. Rebati could not know when Vasu left her. The day too had departed and darkness had cast a pall over every thing. Yet Rebati looked on. She came back to senses only when the old woman called her and the gloom had taken possession of the house.

Rebati began to count days one by one. It was the sixth day of Vasu's departure. Alter the death of her parents she had never approached the threshold but today since morning she had already come there twice to see if Vasu was coming. At about ten in the morning the school children returned from Hariharpur and soon after, news spread in the village that the teacher had breathed his last under a banyan tree on his way back home. He died of cholera at midnight. The villagers mourned for him and men, women and children wept aloud. Some said "How very handsome youngman !" Some others said "What virtues !" and yet some others said "How innocent ! Never wished any harm to the meanest of creatures."

Rebati heard the tidings, so too the old woman. Her voice was choked with weeping. When she was unable to weep any longer she got up and said, "You brought your own end, my child, by coming to this alien place," meaning thereby that Vasu's death was due to his foolish attempts to educate Rebati. He would have certainly lived had he not done that.

Rebati, on the other hand, lay quiet on the floor. One day passed. The next day when the old woman did not find Rebati near her, she began to call aloud, "Oh Rebati ! Oh Rebi Oh Rubbish ! Oh trash !" She had become almost mad, she ceased weeping but began to abuse Rebati in a rage, day and night. Whenever the neighbours passed by that house they heard the same cry, "Oh Rebati ! Oh Rebi ! Oh Rubbish! Oh Trash !"

Not being able to find her, she groped for her in darkness and found her at last and called. But when no voice replied, she felt her body and knew at once that she was having high fever and the skin emitted fire as it were and she was unconscious. She sat for a long while and deliberated as to what she would do. She searched for some body in her mind but could not find one in their wide world. Unable to decide anything, she felt greatly enraged and said to herself "Who would find a remedy for self-inflicted diseases and troubles ?" meaning thereby that Rebati was the cause of her own undoing for the fever was her own seeking as she wanted to read and write.

Day followed day. On the fifth day, Rebati lay almost on the floor. She did not open her eyes nor did she respond when called. But on the sixth day, Rebati appeared to be better because she had shouted twice or thrice. Hearing her voice the old woman went to her feeling from her hands and legs knew that they were cold. She also responded feebly to her call. She looked stirringly and muttered words of her own accord. Any physician in this case would have cited a *sloka* to prove that she was in a state of delirium and had all the symptoms of a fatal fever. But the old woman was delighted thinking that her grandchild was on the way to recovery. The temperature was gone, she had begun to speak and to open her eyes and even begged water to drink. For six days, she did not take even a drop of water. If she could give her some diet, the girl would get up and walk about.

."Will you sleep a while, Darling? I shall cook something for you to take." With these words the old woman came out. But what was

then to prepare her diet with ? She searched for something in the nook and corner of the house but could not find even a handfull of rice. She heaved a sigh and sat for some time. Vasu had purchased ration to last only for five days. Had she eyes, she could have known how that lasted for ten days.

A way can always be found if one sits and thinks. But there were no utensils in the house. Her hand accidentally fell upon a leaking brass pot. With that in hand she straight made for Hari Shah's shop which was situated in the middle of the village. It was not a regular shop but rice, dal, salt and oil were stored by him for the benefit of strangers and even villagers. The old woman arrived at the door of the shop. The shrewd businessman could guess the old woman's purpose as soon as he saw her with the pot. When she narrated the purpose of her visit, Hari Shah examined the utensil by turning it in all directions and said "No, No, there is no rice; who would give you rice in exchange of this useless pot ?" It was not a fact that he had no rice, nor did he intent to refuse her but that he wanted to reduce the value of the pot in the bargain. The old woman was thunderstruck to hear that there was not a grain of rice. "What shall I do ? What am I to give her ? She has just recovered and should be given something." She muttered these words and sat a while.

The sun was about to set. She had already looked piteously at the face of Hari Shah. "Let me go back then and see what my child is doing." With these words in her lips she arose with the pot in her hand when Hari Shah called her back and said, "Give me the pot, let me see if I can find any thing for it." Very soon he handed over to the old woman four *manas* of rice, half a *mana* of *dal* and some salt in exchange of the pot. The old woman got back home resting at five or six places. She had not even washed her face since morning. One can imagine the condition of her body as well as mind. On arrival she called Rebati. She believed that Rebati had fully recovered, she would get up and draw water from the well to enable her to

cook. When she got no response from her she was greatly enraged and approaching her shouted, "O Rebati ! Oh Rebi ! O Rubbish ! Oh Trash !" Even then there was no response.

Meanwhile, Rebati's condition had deteriorated further. There was great pain all over the body which was fast collapsing; the tongue had parched up, there was unquenchable thirst. Seeking a cool place she rolled across the floor and came outside. Even then, there was no relief. She went to the verandah in the backyard.

The day was declining. There was a strong breeze. She sat leaving against the hedge. Her eyes wandered all over the backyard. There grew the plantain tree which her father had planted the year before and was about to bear fruit. Closeby, there blossomed the guava tree which her mother had planted two years before and which she had watered all along. She remembered her mother. Her wits were unsettled, her mind was wandering; so she could not remember things in a connected manner. But she could not efface from her mind the mother's pleasant figure.

Evening drew on. A thick pall of darkness covered the face of mother earth. Rebati looked at the sky. The evening star twinkled. Rebati gazed at it without a wink in her eyes. Gradually the star increased in shape till it assumed the size of a wheel. Yet, it continued to grow, yet there was more effulgence. What was that within the star ? It was the peaceful, loving and joyous figure of her mother, beckoning her to her lap. The mother sent two rays which came down and entered into her heart through the eyes. There was no other sound in the darkness, except her breathing. That sound increased in volume and length till at last two very feeble words '*ma, ma,*' escaped her lips. All was over. There was total darkness, total silence.

The Grandma, in the meantime, had crawled to the place where she had been lying and found that she was not there. She searched for her in the rooms, in the backyard and even in the *dhenki* shed but found her not. She imagined that Rebati might have completely

recovered and was strolling in the garden. She, therefore shouted for her in the usual manner "Oh Rebati ! Oh Rebi ! Oh Rubbish! Oh Trash !" She went to the threshold of the back door and gropingly clambered up the *verandah* which was two hands high and one hand wide.

"So you are here !" She exclaimed but was startled when she put her hand on her body. She gave out a sharp shrill cry. Closely following while there was heard another sound of a body falling down the step.

Since that night, nobody had even seen a living creature in the house of Shyamabandhu Mohanty. The neighbours heard the last voice at about eight O'clock which was "Oh Rebati ! Oh Rebi! Oh Rubbish! Oh Trash."

Courtesy : B.K. Satpathy, ed. *Phakirmohan Senapati : His Life and Literature*, Phakirmohan Sahitya Parishad, Balasore, 1984.

THE EPILOGUE

Vyasakavi-Saraswati-Kavivara Fakirmohan Senapati (1843-1918) heralded a new era—an era of modern Oriya prose, of neo-Oriya nationalism and of constructive social inquiry of colonial India.

A school-teacher turned administrator, Fakirmohan developed a global view, and catholicity of mind that transcended all societal, hierchical and religious bounds and made him a venerable humanist.

His objective historical sense and perception of commonman's helplessness under multiple forms of brutality and oppression in his times made him an intrepid spokesman of the suffering people. He presented his vista "from below" in a language both familiar and faithful to the people who were striving hard for their existence. As an ironic narrator and reporter he could ensure himself access to social stratification, and could report back what he perceived. His investigative journalism had a definite purpose which urged an attitudinal change of the people leading to reformation. He had to parody the established social norms as they had reduced themselves to abasement. He had also to parody the ornate, the literary and the learned diction and was obliged to make use of the language of the mass to drive home his point of view. When he found a particular system or character loathsome and beyond redemption, he would strategically change his tone and would make a harangue to his readers in the text itself. To quote Paul L Sawyer, 'As an ironic celebrant of the local elite, he [Fakirmohan] links himself to the discourses of law, science, logic and scriptural aphorism, but when he narrates from 'below', he has links to discourses and

positions counter to these.'(1) Such strategic interplay of Oriya diction, Fakirmohan probably sought was a necessity for 'linguistic authenticity' when 'the Oriya-speaking tracts were at that time divided into three "smaller colonies" inside a larger British colony.'(2)

The dissipation of the traditional agrarian society and the advent of the first flush of English education leading to the creation of neo-urbanisation stirred Fakirmohan's psyche for casting a rational look upon the social change and assessing its impact. He never directly expressed the abolition of caste system. He favoured education for girls and reorientation of school syllabi with adequate input of science. He instituted awards and scholarships for meritorious students, and addressed students' gatherings. He hated brideprice, wedding of the unequals, the old marrying the underaged girls, and advocated in favour of widow remarriage. He believed in family harmony and put stress on children's respect for the elders in the family.

Fakirmohan believed in the dispensation of Providence but was not a fatalist. He was a *Karma yogi*, and believed in the active principle of work ethics and human dignity. He believed in integration of world religions and practiced religious tolerance. His poem, "Mu Hata Bahuda" (Just on my return from the market), composed in about 124 couplets, is a humorous record of Fakirmohan's discomfiture how he fails to sell his translations, novels, poems and indigenous writings against the stiff competition of non-native books and journals; and British imports of various works of Homer, Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth and Byron;

1. Paul L Sawyer, 'An Oriya Village and the Battle of Plassey, Senapati's Allegory of the Raj', published in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.XLI No.46, Nov.,18-24, 2006.

2. Dash Gaganendranath, 'Fakirmohan Senapati's Discovery from Below : Decolonisation and the Search for Linguistic Authenticity,' *Ibid*.

and books on history, philosophy and botany etc. He disliked the Orissi edition of Young Bengal (of H.L.Derozio) in Orissa; but as a revivalist, he dreamt of resurrecting the traditional Oriya society. He anticipated the emergence of Orissa as a powerful national unit where Oriya would be the lingua-franca. Indeed, Fakirmohan was the precursor of a new era who paved the path for Orissa's emergence as an independent province in 1936, eighteen years after his sad demise.

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A reliable and authentic document on Vyasakavi Fakirmohan Senapati in the backdrop of the socio-cultural spectrum of the nineteenth century Orissa .

The monograph faithfully records Fakirmohan's irresistible humour and irony, his passion for versification, his realistic perception of contemporaneity and depiction of social maladies and injustice under the colonial regime, and how they are boldly orchestrated in Fakirmohan's innovative and inornate Oriya idiom.



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